

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

Messenger

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 25 No. 1

Tightening the processing-recruiting connection



Commander's Commentary

Our role in the accession process is important. Every day we impact readiness, and the future of our Armed Forces. Your personal commitment to excellence directly contributes to our mission accomplishment; you make a difference.

I offer an analogy to illustrate my point. A theory in physics called "The Butterfly Effect" maintains that the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can begin a chain of events in the air currents that can lead to a change of weather in the Philippines.

Like the butterfly, our actions — both individually and as a command — have global implications. Our mission to "Ensure the quality of military accessions during peacetime and mobilization in accordance with established standards" directly impacts the quality of tomorrow's U.S. Armed Forces and consequently, the future of the world we live in.

Our mission is far-reaching. Last fiscal year we accessed 260,000 service men and women. To achieve this, last year's processing workload equated to: 1.4 million Student/Enlistment ASVAB tests, 425,000 medical exams, the initiation of 335,00 background screening checks, 335,000 enlistment contracts, transmission of 240,000 packets of personnel data, management of 850,000 applicant overnight hotel stays and management of a \$42 million dollar budget for applicant transportation.

Each of us plays an important role in the accomplishment of our mission. We are ultimately responsible for how well we do our jobs. Quality is free! At the end of the day, we should ask ourselves the following: Have I completely satisfied my customers? Was I prompt and attentive? Did I find ways to improve my service as I worked? Did I do what's right, use common sense and contribute to the "family of teams?"

Our accession partners are moving quickly to leap from outdated, inefficient business processes into a new era defined by the power of Web services. To keep pace, we too must transform, and our strategy involves a four pillar approach: enhance business practices, leverage technology, improve the "product," and professionalize our workforce.

Best Business Practices: I would like to highlight that during the A - Z review of processing, more than 50 people, including many from our command, and others from the accession community identified 120 proposals for improvements to the "process" of processing. Currently we are reviewing these suggestions. We will brief flag officers from the accession community at the end of April. At this senior stakeholders' briefing, we will seek to gain their support for these needed improvements.

Leveraging Technology: From the IT architecture review, we gained an unbiased top-to-bottom assessment of our ability to meet current and future customer requirements for enlistment processing. Having now established a conceptual framework for change, our next step is to complete a detailed business case analysis and develop a funding strategy.

Improving the "product": We can only improve what we measure; key to having situational awareness is having the right measures or metrics. In reviewing how we measure our command's performance, we've initially identified 16 processing "metrics" that are central to how we do business. We will use these metrics as a first step toward determining what "right" looks like.

Additionally, we are implementing a new long-term strategy for facilities, which positions the Corps of Engineers in Savannah, Ga., as the "Center of Excellence" for MEPS design. They will

help us determine the space required for optimum operational efficiency and then design and configure a future "model MEPS." We are also enhancing our 10-year plan of MEPS renovations and relocations. As part of this forward thinking, we will soon break ground at Fort Lee, Va., for a new Richmond MEPS facility.

Professional Development and Quality of Life Improvements: In developing our workforce, we must keep pace with the demands of an increasingly dynamic work environment where knowledge and organizational agility are benchmarks for success. We have identified about a million dollars of unfunded requirements for military and civilian training. I am working to find the funding to make this training a reality. The first major opportunity for our team to grow will take place when MEPS commanders and first sergeants will experience revolutionary and creative thinking at the mid-March National Training Conference.

We are also taking a new and much-needed look at family and service member support. The Family Support Group tiger team has briefed their final recommendations and we are in the process of implementation. We've funded a Family Support Symposium, at which spouse and command representatives will highlight family and service member concerns. These recommendations will roll into the Army Family Action Plan. In January, we launched an employee assistance program, providing web referral services for all military members and their families. Details are outlined on page 13 of this issue.


This issue of the Messenger focuses on teamwork — USMEPCOM's critical relationship with the recruiting community. On a daily basis, all levels of the command are engaged simultaneously with their recruiting service counterparts. At the MEPS, our personnel work face-to-face with recruiters and liaisons at the tactical level. Meanwhile, the Sector staffs work at solving concerns that rise at the operational level, while Headquarters personnel assist at all levels of the operation.

To move into the future, while consistently meeting customers' needs, we must transform our command to meet strategic goals and fulfill our vision: to be a first-class customer-centered, future-focused learning organization, driven by best business practices and web-centric technology, providing 21st Century entrance processing and qualification, anytime — anywhere.

I challenge every member of the USMEPCOM team to maintain and heighten your commitment to improving individual and team performance while keeping a broad perspective. We must constantly strive to provide the very best customer service today while transforming our ability to provide even better service tomorrow. Remember — quality is free; strive for excellence.



Col. David L. Slotwinski


DAVID L. SLOTWINSKI
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding

Fort Jackson settles into temporary home

Fort Jackson MEPS personnel are working in an old gymnasium while their facility is gutted and revamped. The building affords ample space, and walls and offices create a professional atmosphere, but the basketball hoops overhead are a constant reminder of the building's real purpose.

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Command**

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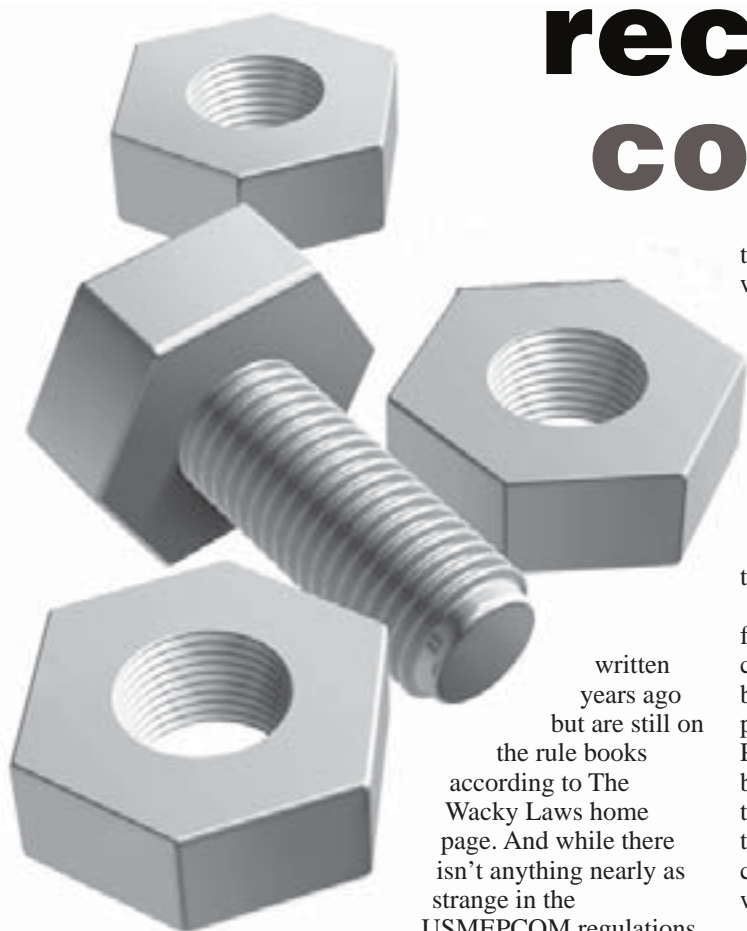
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Tightening the processing - recruiting connection



By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Pregnant and wearing a housecoat? Then you better not drive a car in California. It's against the law. And think twice before fishing on horseback in Utah, or you could find yourself in the slammer. In Pennsylvania, you can sing in the rain, but it's a state law that you can't sing in the bathtub. These and a host of other wacky but true laws were

written
years ago
but are still on
the rule books
according to The
Wacky Laws home
page. And while there
isn't anything nearly as
strange in the
USMEPCOM regulations

for processing applicants, Dale Ostrowski said the command is taking a hard look at all of the *do's and don'ts* of the processing biz, and is ready to throw out the things that were written into law during another time and place. It's all in an effort to refine processing and improve the working relationship between the command and recruiting.

"In some cases, there might be a rule that doesn't allow us to do something. But

that rule may have been written 20 years ago, when we didn't have the technology to do it. Some of these rules written years ago no longer apply. If we have the technology to do something, and it makes sense, we're going to do it, even if we have to change the rules."

The command is searching for these types of necessary changes as part of its A to Z business review, that's one part of the Transformation Process. The end result will be a smoother process, and that equates to better customer service for the applicants, and better relations with the recruiters.

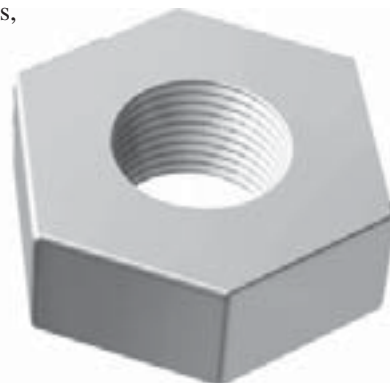
While several USMEPCOM directorates and sections play a pivotal role in the accession process — whether it be operations, medical, or the information technology folks who keep everything humming — the resounding message, even from recruiters, seems to be that communication is the key.

"We are in contact (with recruiting commands) on nearly a daily basis to some degree,"

Ostrowski said. "It's e-mail, telephone calls, messages; mostly e-mail. There are always individual applicant issues, and it's always a learning process."

That daily contact was put to the test on Sept. 11, 2001. The story has been told before, but perhaps best describes the relationship trifecta of recruiter, MEPS, and training. Until the hijackers plowed those airplanes into the World Trade Center and Pentagon, recruits almost always got to boot camp by air.

"(Sept. 11) was the first time ever that we did it totally over ground," Ostrowski said. "Nobody ever thought an event of that magnitude would happen and would shut down the airlines."



Suddenly, the MEPS became receptacles for a stuffed up pipeline of applicants. Frantic phone calls, messages, and e-mails followed in the next few days, getting recruiters to stop bringing in more applicants, and helping with those already on hand. Then there was communication with the training bases.

"When you can't get applicants out of town, that's a problem, especially in the case of the Air Force where they have very little down-time (between basic training and technical training). If you have someone going to a highly technical school that only starts every three months, you can't have that person sitting around."

Understanding this type of detail about processing people for entrance into five unique military services doesn't come easy. For those who spend only a brief time in the command, it might be difficult to fully grasp the USMEPCOM mission, with its vast array of eyebrow-raising acronyms.

Ostrowski has the benefit of working in USMEPCOM long enough to understand many particulars of the relationship between processing and recruiting, and he has seen the improvements that have been made. He was assigned to the command, first as a lieutenant colonel, in 1997, and as a civilian since September 2001. Add to that fact that he has his own recruiting experience — as an operations officer in Milwaukee in the early 1980s, and then as a recruit

service commander in Denver, Colo., from 1989 to 1992. He said he knows firsthand how the recruiting business works, and he can see how the USMEPCOM part has gotten better over the years.

"I can see (the improvements)," he said, "because I see where we've come from."

When he first filled this seat in an Air Force uniform, Ostrowski said, at best, the command could only project to training bases 50 percent of scheduled applicants who would actually arrive. In other words, USMEPCOM would tell the training bases to expect 100 recruits to show up for training, when the real number might be closer to 200.

"That's now at about 80 percent and sometimes as high as 100 percent," he said.

USMEPCOM determines the number of applicants due for training based on the number of meal tickets distributed each day. But that's not a perfect science, since these meal tickets are only given to those who live far enough away from the training base that they'll need a meal along the way. But if someone lives in San Antonio, Texas, and is going to Air Force basic training at San Antonio, they don't get a meal ticket.

The problem is fixable, Ostrowski said, and projection accuracy will increase as Operations interfaces with the Information Technology Directorate to bring online state-of-the-art software that will allow the command to communicate with recruiting

commands and training bases in real-time so they know exact numbers of recruits processed throughout the day.

"We already do a partial exchange of information with the Army and Marines," said Bill Armstrong, chief of the Systems Analysis and Design Division, which is responsible for devising such programs. "The technology is already there, but we have to spend the money to make sure we can communicate with everyone."

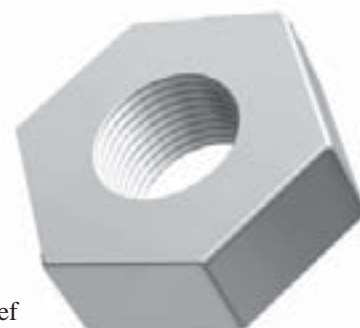
It's better to take it a piece at a time, he said, as opposed to spending buckets of money and doing it all at once.

"Because if we do it that way, and it doesn't work, we've just spent a lot of money for nothing. This is a highly complex operation, and it's going to take time to do it right. We'd like to do it right, a piece at a time, instead of doing it wrong all at once."

Armstrong has been a part of the command since 1980, first joining the staff as a computer programmer, and has seen the relationship between USMEPCOM and recruiting evolve through the decades.

"We constantly meet regularly to listen to their needs, and we go back to see if we can meet those needs. Those (recruiters) have my sympathy because it is not an easy job that they have, and it's in our interest to help them make their job easier."

To that end, Armstrong said there is more than just one initiative poker in the



fireplace. Some other improvements down the line include a new computerized ASVAB, or CAT-ASVAB, that runs on a Windows program instead of MS-DOS. Even further down the road, is a plan to possibly put the actual ASVAB on the Internet where the applicant may be able to take the test in the recruiter's office, or his own home.

The first initiative is already here. Armstrong said 12 MEPS will test the new Windows-based ASVAB in April to work out any kinks. As for the Internet and the take-it-at-home ASVAB, Armstrong said that process must be created to safeguard the test.

"The security issue is important. If a kid can take it at home, how do we know he's not cheating? Perhaps there will be a security code, or once they get to the MEPS, they can take a smaller version of the test to see if they really know the information. These are different things we're looking at."

While all these ideas seem feasible, they won't come without money, Armstrong said.

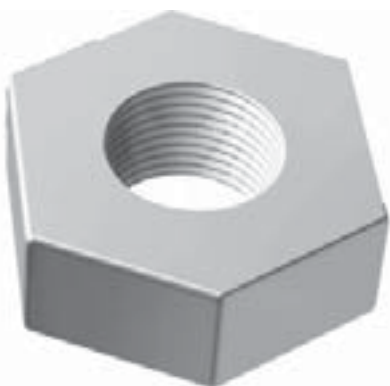


Tightening the connection

"The command recognizes that," he said. "We know we can't accomplish what we need to accomplish with technology without that money."

Col. Dwayne Hafer, chief of operations for the Air Force Recruiting Service, said the process between commands will only grow smoother as technology improves, but that comes with a caveat.

"We're always talking about technology because we know that is the future of our business. We have to constantly improve our communication skills, our systems, and our databases. But at the same time, we need to talk about what happens if something goes wrong with technology. We still have to be able to do the job if the telephone goes dead, or if e-mail goes down. We can't get too dependent on it. Thanks to all the work that went into (preparing for Y2K) we should always be able to do that, because we might not always have the luxury of a computer."



Like his counterparts at USMEPCOM, Hafer said both commands must continue to meet and discuss each other's needs.

"You can nitpick the MEPS all day long, but they have a job to do, just like we do, and the more we talk to one another, the more we can understand their needs, and they can understand our needs."

One major need is to simplify the process, and that doesn't necessarily require a fatter wallet. Ostrowski said another goal is to streamline the paperwork recruiters have to put together just to make sure their prospective recruit can make it through the processing.

"In some cases these packages are 45 pages thick, and a lot of the information is repeated," Ostrowski said. "That's not necessary. Then at each station, those packets have to be broken down and clerks have to get a certain piece of information from certain paperwork. The goal is to get the information in the hands of the people who need it — whomever, wherever, and maybe have it fully automated."

That way, he said, the recruiters and the clerks at the MEPS might not have to take the time to type

an applicant's name and social security number on every piece of paper in a packet, if it's already available in one location.

All these plans and changes aren't just taking place in Operations. Directly catty-corner from Ostrowski, in the vast room where he works, are another set of desks and offices where the medics and docs of USMEPCOM sit.

As Operations has the job of getting the applicants to where they need to go, it's the Medical Directorate's job to make sure those applicants meet specific standards. USMEPCOM's medical personnel don't communicate on a daily basis with recruiting as much as their counterparts in Operations, but the connection with recruiting can be just as important, as each applicant must pass a battery of tests before they're allowed through Freedom's Front Door.

Perhaps one of the biggest tests of the relationship between the two commands — from a medical perspective — occurred when the Department of Defense decided to add HIV testing in 1985, and drug and alcohol testing in 1988.

"It was a shock when HIV testing was added, and I think there was a perception in recruiting that this would really affect their numbers," said Carolyn Carson, who

runs both programs. "But it really hasn't had that big of an impact."

"When we first started the HIV testing, 1 per 1,000 came back as positive. Out of the last 366,000 samples, 260 came back as positive."

When drug testing became mandatory, shock gave way to a little resistance, and at one time, the Marines and Navy decided to do the drug testing once applicants arrived at training, Carson said.

"But then they realized they were spending money on people who were going to be discharged for drug use. It didn't make sense to test them once they got there, when we could do it before that money was spent," Carson said.

It also helps that the DoD system is run above reproach. Carson described how each blood sample for HIV testing and urine sample has a "bulletproof" chain of custody and is double and triple tested using the strictest of standards.

"Recruiting knows we're strict, and they know if we make a mistake, we don't wait on a recruiting service or the DoD. We'll raise the flag before someone else does, because my MEPCOM word is worth its weight in platinum," Carson said. "It's important to be honest. If we have 1,000 positives, but one



time say, 'We messed up this one,' before anyone else says something, we're going to be trusted more."

Because some potential applicants are shown the door for not cutting the medical mustard, there is a perception that "the MEPS medically disqualifies applicants," but that's not the case, said Dr. Kathleen Dallen, chief of medical and professional standards at USMEPCOM. "We have to do a better job of explaining to the applicants that we are only enforcing the (Department of Defense) standard, and explaining that it's up to the recruiting commands to help with waivers (to those standards)."

Too many times, officials said, the Medical Directorate receives complaints about a disqualification when the applicant's package was never considered for a waiver by the military branch. There is talk, however, to develop a system where the applicant is made aware of the waiver procedure while at the MEPS, instead of the package sitting on a desk where it might be forgotten. That, in turn, helps the applicant, and it helps the recruiter get more people into uniform.

"We're always considering ways to make the system work better," said Dallen, who has also spent time in the trenches, working as a fee-based doctor, then chief medical officer at the Milwaukee MEPS for two

years before coming to the command headquarters in 1999.

That experience helps bring a fresh perspective to her job.

"When you have people here working policy issues who have worked the daily rigors at the MEPS, and breathed the same air as the recruiters, it helps," Dallen said. "I understand they have a certain number of people they must get into the service, and they might not have time for each package. We have to make it as easy as possible for them."

She said there are plenty of anecdotes that showcase USMEPCOM initiatives to work better with the recruiters. One in particular from a few years ago still makes her chuckle.

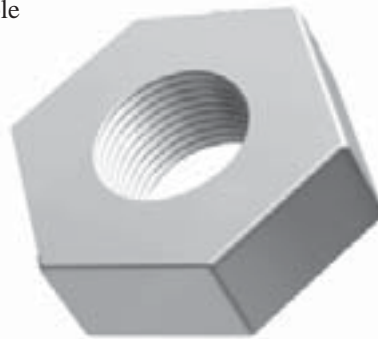
"A recruiter had an applicant who had blown off one of his fingers when he was lighting off firecrackers, and the regulation was written in medical language, so he couldn't figure out if he was eligible. He called the MEPS to see if the kid would pass the physical, but the medic was having a hard time explaining the regulation over the phone. Finally, (the medic) said, 'Do you have a Xerox machine in your office?'"

The end result: the recruiter photocopied the applicant's hand, faxed it to

the MEPS, and the MEPS called right back saying it wouldn't be a problem.

The phone call was part of a Dial-A-Medic program that each MEPS runs to one extent or another, but it's an example of the initiative that must be displayed to work better with the recruiters, said Col. (Dr.) Kathleen Sheehan, deputy director of the Medical Directorate.

"We're always discussing ways to improve our service.



We want to give the recruiters greater access to the medics at the MEPS, and possibly rewrite the regulation so it's more easily understood."

Despite all the goodwill and good ideas, officials said they know there will always be some form of tension within the accession triad, but that's to be expected.

"Anytime somebody is in a quality assurance mode, there is going to be tension between production and quality. The tension will always exist because produc-

tion wants to put (people into uniform). We know this," Ostrowski said.

"Recruiters want the MEPS on 24/7 operations so they can bring whomever wherever so they can process," he said. "We have set schedules so we can't have that, and we can't always bend for one individual at the detriment of the masses, but we can make the process better for everyone."

And though there may be disagreements or different ways of looking at the job, Hafer, the Air Force's director of operations for recruiting, said both sides are committed to working with each other, and improving customer service for the most important part of the equation — the applicant.

"And when you get down to it," he said, "that's the bottom line, to make sure they get the best customer service — whether it's the recruiter, or the chief medical officer at the MEPS, or the counselor finding them a job. To do that, we have to communicate (with USMEPCOM), and those lines of communication are great. We talk to each other, we e-mail each other, and that way we can identify problems so they can be fixed. We've got working groups going on all the time, when you've got things like that, any problem — or anything perceived as a problem — can be fixed." ■

Improving **the** relationship

Recruiting and MEPS, face-to-face

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
 Messenger Associate Editor

While great leaders often tout the importance of what the troops in the MEPS do to usher applicants through Freedom's Front Door, there wouldn't be anyone to send through that door if it weren't for the recruiters who get them to the welcome mat.

It's not always a flawless process. No doubt there are those on both sides of the fence who have a horror story or two to share about wily recruiters trying to pull a fast one, or mean and nasty MEPS employees going out of their ways to cause problems (all of these stories of which we'll leave to readers to discuss among themselves).

But despite some occasional friction between the group that scours the countryside in search of those to sign on the dotted line, and the group that puts said signers through an array of tests to see if they can get through that front door that everyone is always talking about, both sides can agree on one thing, it seems — the importance of working together and through problems, so the end result is getting the maximum amount of recruits from point A to point B.

Not an easy proposition, you say? Rather officiate at the next Tonya Harding-Nancy Kerrigan celebrity boxing match? More fun than running an illegal, back alley pit bull fight?

Far from it. The connection between recruiter, liaison, and the MEPS doesn't have to be a tempestuous one, and in most cases it's not. With 65 MEPS, odds are there might be a few places that have more friction than others, just as the odds say there are those stations with some methods to prevent that from happening in the first place.

While it would be impossible to list all the tricks of the trade among all of the pro-

cessing stations, a few randomly-selected MEPS said their working relationship with recruiters is a good one, and when it's sometimes not, there are ways to fix any breakdowns in communication.

"Every day there is some kind of issue, and some are more dramatic than others," said Maj. Mike Leichty, commander of the Columbus MEPS, in Ohio. "Normally we're able to work those out. It's in everyone's best interest to try to work through any problems."

Like many other MEPS, Leichty said his station provides an operations manual to all liaisons and recruiters so everyone knows the ins and outs of military processing, and what is expected. That way, there's no doubt as to the rules and requirements.

But beyond the paperwork and formalities, he said it's important to have a good relationship with the liaisons.

"We include those folks in our social events, and we consider them part of our family at all social activities."

Leichty and his wife, Terri, had a Christmas luncheon at his house, and



Maj. Mike Leichty

"It always helps when they know you a little better, and we know them, because we have favors on a daily basis. If it wasn't for those guys, we'd be in a lot of trouble sometimes."

Before coming to the liaison office, Gibson was one of those out finding new recruits, and he'll most likely return to that job in about five months.

"I've learned a whole lot since coming here," he said, "and I think what the MEPS

"Not all of them could make it, but those who could break away for an hour of home cooking were welcome ... The more we rub shoulders with them, the more they can open up."

— Maj. Mike Leichty, discussing one way he reaches out to liaisons in his MEPS

made sure the liaisons made it as well.

"Not all of them could make it, but those who could break away for an hour of home cooking were welcome," he said. "The more we rub shoulders with them, the more they can open up."

Marine Staff Sgt. Jason Gibson, a Marine liaison, said it's helped the recruiter and liaison-MEPS relationship.

does is great, but the liaisons also have an important job and we need to get the word out to recruiters. Some recruiters think the MEPS is here and the people are sitting on their butts, and that's not the case. We need to explain this whole thing, on why the paperwork is important, and what can happen if it's not completed. Sometimes





Maj. Mark Jordan III

the paperwork isn't the way it should be before people get here to process. I did the same thing when I was a recruiter, but when I go back there (to recruiting duty), my packages are going to be wound tight."

Even when there is a snafu, the Columbus MEPS tries to help out the recruiters, Leichty said.

"We had one this morning. It was Marine Corps mission day, and we try to really cater to the Marines on that day. The Army forgot it was Marine Corps mission day, and they brought a walk-on."

Each MEPS tries to accurately forecast its workload by scheduling applicants in advance, but inevitably there are a few who show up who aren't on the docket.

Since Columbus doesn't allow walk-ons from other services during another military branch's mission day, the MEPS could have sent the applicant home.

"But this was a young high school gal and she traveled three hours to process," Leichty said. "We got together with our folks, figured we could take her, and the Army was grateful. The next time something happens and we might not be able to help them, they'll understand that we're not trying to make their life hard, and there is a legitimate reason why we can or can't do something."

Maj. Mark Jordan III, the commander of the Shreveport MEPS in Louisiana, said it's imperative to try to help the recruiters as much as possible, and not just for good relations with recruiters.

"If you have an applicant who can't process, and we have to send them away, their view of the military isn't going to be as good. They'll talk to their parents, their

friends, and their teachers. It makes sense to help as much as we can."

To that end, Jordan sends a monthly newsletter to all recruiting commanders to let them know of upcoming schedules and events.

"It's an idea I stole from another MEPS that was doing it quarterly, but I think it's better doing it on a monthly basis because if you project it too far out, those dates are out of sight, out of mind. This way, they know when mission day is, they know when test dates take place at different schools.

"One of the biggest problems in the past has been making sure there are proctors at the schools for testing," Jordan said. "If



Maj. Jay Waters

"If you have an applicant who can't process, and we have to send them away, their view of the military isn't going to be as good. They'll talk to their parents, their friends, and their teachers. It makes sense to help as much as we can."

— Maj. Mark Jordan III, on the added benefit of helping recruiters as much as possible

we don't have a proctor, then we try to hire a teacher, but if that doesn't work, it looks bad all around, and it makes the military look bad as a whole. The newsletter helps prevent no-shows."

Unlike a lot of MEPS commanders, Jordan has a deeper understanding of the work that goes on in the recruiting area. He was a recruiting commander in Michigan from 1994 to 1995.

"(The recruiters) have a lot of things they are trying to do. It's a tough fight finding a qualified applicant, and if they forget a piece of paperwork, we try to help them out. Because of my background, I'm more willing to grant an exception if there is an extra walk-on."

One of the biggest sticking points between recruiters and the Portland, Maine, MEPS is with height and weight requirements.

"It's the most controversial," said Army Maj. Jay Waters, the MEPS commander there. "No matter what, it's to (the recruiter's) disadvantage. If an applicant doesn't meet standards, we might hear that we're doing it wrong, we're being too strict, or we're pulling the (measuring) tape too tight."

Waters said one way to combat that is to take new recruiters and liaisons on a walk-through of each station at the MEPS.

"The intent is for recruiters to have confidence in us, and so they know we know what we're doing, and not just making up rules."

And just like the Columbus MEPS, Waters said the liaisons are included in all the social outings, whether it be a cook out or a trip to see the Portland Pirates, the city's minor league hockey team.

"Sometimes you can handle disagreements better in a social setting," Waters said.

All of the commanders made one common point — regardless of which command the person in uniform reports to, the different commands still play on one core team.

"It's obvious why it's important (to have a good working relationship), and you don't have to say it with the regular clichés," Leichty said. "We have different commands, different jobs, and different responsibilities, but we're both trying to accomplish the same thing, and that's getting people into basic training." ■

NCO integrity is non-negotiable

By Sgt. Maj. Alfonso Villa
Former USMEPCOM Senior
Enlisted Advisor

I want to start by discussing one word that is important to me, and one that needs to be stressed to everyone. The word is *integrity*. It's one word that has a lot of different meanings, especially to those of us who wear a military uniform.

In the coming months and years ahead, you will hear a lot about the transformation process at USMEPCOM. We are transforming the way we do

business and the way we conduct ourselves to better meet the needs of the 21st century. All of us in uniform need to think about areas where we can transform ourselves to be better soldiers, Marines, sailors, airmen, and coast guardsmen by fixing areas where we may be deficient.

Take a few minutes and give yourself an integrity gut check. If you give yourself an honest look and don't think you need to improve your integrity, then good for you. But if most of us take a hard look

in the mirror, we can all find something or some area — maybe it's on the job or in our personal life or the way we train — where we can become a little better.

USMEPCOM plays an extremely important role in the military accession process; but we're not on the front line. We're not in a foxhole. We're not lugging around an M-16. As such, some of us might get a little lackadaisical when it comes to getting the job done. How many of you turn into "clock watchers" who bolt out



Sgt. Maj. Alfonso Villa

the door at 4:30? Or, how many of you hit the road around 4:20

Continued on page 26

MEPS View

If you could fix one thing between recruiters and the MEPS to make the operation run smoother, what would it be and why?



Marine Sgt. Christopher Schlepp, Fargo MEPS:

"If I could fix one thing between recruiters and the MEPS it would be accurate and timely submission of documentation on applicants. Recruiters, service liaisons and the MEPS staff work diligently to ensure quality applicants enter our Armed Forces. Accurate and timely submission of documentation will help guarantee the success of this mission."



Jack Stovall, Honolulu

MEPS: "I'd make a MEPS orientation for the recruiters, and every person assigned to the MEPS would spend a day with a recruiter. This would promote better understanding, teamwork and customer service. Everyone should have some knowledge of the pressures that recruiters serve under and realize how difficult it can be to get an applicant to the MEPS, processed and shipped to basic training."



Jason Means, Nashville

MEPS: "I would like to see recruiters informing the applicant in greater detail about his or her eight-year obligation. Too many times, we get applicants on the back line that have no idea that they have an eight-year obligation. Sometimes they change their mind about enlisting."



Maj. Steven McCoy, Montgomery MEPS:

"This is simple — better attention to detail. We continue to see too many needless errors in the applicant package that cause the process to slow down or halt. Things like a lack of a signed parental consent form for minors, lack of recruiter signatures, or missing 214/REDD for those with prior service. Simply paying better attention to detail will go a long way toward improving applicant processing, making the job easier for the recruiters and the MEPS."

Jacksonville improves communication

with key players

— specialized changes shape processing to customer needs

By 1st Lt. Dalmyra P. Jessamy
Jacksonville MEPS Testing Control Officer

In a continuous search for innovative ways to improve applicant processing, Jacksonville MEPS personnel took a good look at how to enhance communication, an important component of any mission's success.

They set out to improve three non-related communication areas – between the MEPS and a local Transient Personnel Unit, between MEPS and liaison personnel, and between MEPS and HIV positive applicants. To do this, they took part in a Navy TPU conference, invented a new processing tool called a “discrepancy sheet,” and found ways to provide information and help to applicants who receive HIV notifications.

When an applicant is prior service Navy, the MEPS sends that person to a Navy TPU. The TPU at Naval Air Station Jacksonville was having difficulties with some of the people who arrived there after re-enlisting at the MEPS. Some arrived at the TPU with medical troubles, school seating problems, reporting date mismatches, or rank, bonus, promotion, or other issues. TPU leaders said some sailors told them things like, the MEPS told them the TPU would change their rank or job, or the MEPS medical staff hid their disqualifying conditions. In many cases, sailors who arrived at the TPU with these types of problems ended up staying there until the issues were resolved.

“The TPU, which normally houses people for less than a month, was having to house people in long-term facilities,” said Cmdr. Elizabeth Froslee, Jacksonville MEPS commander. “Then they were dealing with resulting discipline problems, missed school seats, and lack of barracks space.

“They wanted to understand our process,” Froslee said. The TPU personnel visited the MEPS in an effort to do this. “They got so much out of the visit, they asked us to give a presentation at their national TPU conference.”

Froslee and a Navy liaison attended the conference and presented information on USMEPCOM, the command's mission, and Navy personnel issues.

“We were able to enlighten the TPU personnel about what we do,” Froslee said. “They didn't understand this before the conference. Before, they didn't even have the phone numbers they needed.”

Since the conference, the current TPU commander told Froslee that things have improved. “He said it's helped out tremendously in keeping the flow of sailors moving to ships and squadrons. They're talking to the Navy liaison office more. They said the improved communication has dramatically decreased their workload.”

Since TPU personnel now understand the MEPS mission, and made a stronger connection to the MEPS and the Navy liaison office, they're able to prevent problems related to personnel issues like rank, bonuses or promotions. They're also able to avert unnecessary school seating problems, and properly deal with medical issues.

“Our communication with the TPU enabled all three sides of the accession triad to work together,” Froslee said. “Not all MEPS are near TPUs, but I encourage those that are to contact the TPU and improve communication lines.”

In another area of processing, the Jacksonville MEPS staff had noticed a communication “weakness” between the morning and evening personnel in the liaison offices. The lack of information exchange was causing tension between staff members. To prevent any further problems, the processing section introduced a new processing tool, called a “discrepancy sheet” as part of the QRP – quality review process – that streamlines applicant flow for each service liaison.

The “discrepancy sheet” is typically given to the liaisons two hours prior to closing, which allows each service liaison the opportunity to gather missing information or paperwork and add it to the applicant's file before morning check-in. As needed, the recruiter can easily be reached to obtain missing forms or signatures. If the services are unable to fulfill this obligation before close of business, the services are not given that particular applicant's packet. The packet is then set aside on a dedicated files room shelf. This allows the opening crew a quick means of locating the packet and knowing precisely what is required.

Providing the written information to the liaisons during the afternoon allows the services the chance to floor those applicants that would otherwise have show stopping discrepancies such as missing parental consent or DD-214 forms, which are difficult to get at 5:45 a.m.

Much of the missing paperwork is identified during the QRP process and also during night testing. Once night testing is complete, testing personnel have the opportunity to annotate additional items that were identified during the evening and file the discrepancy sheet in the files room for the opening officer, the processing NCOIC and the service liaisons.

Since its introduction to the morning process, the discrepancy sheet has de-



Accessions Commander makes lasting impression in Indianapolis

By Sgt. T.R. Harris
Indianapolis MEPS
Public Affairs Representative

In any organization, strong and positive leadership and proper communication are leading factors that make the difference between success and failure. Lt. Gen. Dennis Cavin, Commander,



Lt. Gen. Dennis Cavin,
Commander, U.S. Army
Accessions Command

U.S. Army Accessions Command, visited the Indianapolis MEPS to advise and encourage both the station and recruiting staff on how to build "the bridge to success."

Cavin's visit to Indianapolis was not as a mediator to the occasional issues that arise between the MEPS and the recruiting district. His presence provided an influential ear for staff feedback on ways to improve both processing and recruiting.

The Army Accessions Command, "From First Handshake to First Unit Assigned," consists of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Fort Knox, Ky.; the U.S. Army Cadet Command, Fort Monroe, Va.; and the U.S. Army Training Center, Fort Jackson, S.C. Additionally, Cavin has Department of the Army-directed executive agent authority for USMEPCOM.

The general visited each MEPS section and talked to personnel about their concerns and ideas for future improvements during his tour of the

entire facility. He stressed that, "The first impression applicants receive about the military start here at the MEPS."

"From the first hand shake with the recruiter to the swearing in ceremony, we need to give applicants honest and quality service." The general talked to parents of applicants who were preparing to ship to basic training. He wanted to know the parents' feelings about their sons and daughters joining the Armed Forces. Many parents were supportive of their children and others were a little worried because of recent world events.

Cavin assured them that their sons and daughters were making the right decision by volunteering to make a difference for their country. A popular point of interest posed to the Accessions Commander, while touring Indianapolis MEPS, was the question of his thoughts on what factors contributed to meeting the recruiting mission at year end. The general said USAREC's success was based on three things:

great recruiters, advertising, and incentives. He commented that, "the recruiters put forth an outstanding effort by working tirelessly to get applicants processed and shipped out to basic training."

"Advertising through websites and televisions increased accessibility and visibility to applicants." He also mentioned that current incentives in place such as monetary bonuses and choice of duty station also helped applicants make the decision to enlist.

Cavin ended his tour at the MEPS by conducting an enlistment ceremony. Before giving the applicants the Oath of Enlistment, he thanked each applicant for their decision to serve their country and wished them well in their military career.

The general's visit left a lasting impression on MEPS personnel and reminded them that good leadership at any level includes the fundamental quality of taking care of people.

Jacksonville improvements

creased morning check in time by 30 minutes, and it has eased the workload for MEPS personnel. Several options have been implemented over the past to assist the recruiting liaisons and MEPS personnel in processing applicants but none to date have been able to streamline the entire process and still allow flexibility with correcting discrepancies like the discrepancy sheet has. The Jacksonville MEPS has been able to ensure and continue providing quality "red carpet treatment" with the implementation of this form.

The third area of improved communication involved applicants who, while at the MEPS, received notification of being

HIV positive. To help these applicants, MEPS personnel have developed a good working relationship with the local county health department.

"When one applicant was notified he was HIV positive, he told me he was going to kill himself," Froslee said. "One of his relatives had been mistreated by his family due to being HIV positive, and the applicant was afraid to go home."

This incident and other notifications motivated MEPS personnel to build their relationship with country health professionals. In doing this, they obtained brochures, and access to immediate counseling for applicants.

"Most of these applicants are being driven home by a recruiter," Froslee said. "We provide an information packet for them to read during the trip. The information we provide helps to minimize the chance of a severe reaction. Fortunately, these notifications aren't common. When necessary, we want to provide each person with a great deal of awareness."

In all of these efforts, Jacksonville MEPS personnel continually strive to achieve a positive and productive relationship with all of its partners in the accession community.

"We want the MEPS to be viewed as a credible organization," Froslee said. ■

Command military personnel gain employee assistance program

Military members assigned to USMEPCOM gained the benefits of an employee assistance program for themselves and their family members Feb. 1.

Most people face problems that can interfere with both work and home life. By its nature, military service includes additional challenges. For this reason, the Department of Defense provides an array of assistance programs on military installations. As a supplement, the U.S. Army Accessions Command has contracted with EAP Consultants, Inc., to provide additional assistance to its military personnel, including those assigned to USMEPCOM.

"The greatest benefit of this program is that it's not tied to facilities," said Maj. Gerald Claude, chief of Personnel Management at Headquarters, USMEPCOM. "You don't have to be on a military installation to receive benefits. The program is available across the United States."

"It's a proven, workable concept," Claude said. The U.S. Army Recruiting Command has contracted this type of program for its recruiters for several years.

"The program has been very successful in USAREC," Claude said. Now USAAC has contracted the program for all its personnel, including USAREC, USMEPCOM, and the U.S. Army Cadet Command.

The EAP consultants can help military personnel and their families cope with and solve many types of problems. They offer professional, confidential counseling and consultation that can ensure people take early, positive steps toward problem resolution. Some services are available at no cost, and others are either covered by insurance, or offered at reduced rates.

EAP Consultants, Inc., is a private, independent firm with a network of offices. They offer assessment, short-term counseling, and referral services for a wide range of personal problems as well as a variety of work/life issues. The EAP professionals help people identify and clarify their concerns, look at all the options, and develop a plan of action to create solutions

that work. If additional assistance is needed, the consultants will refer people to the most appropriate and affordable resources.

EAP Consultants, Inc. will help with all types of problems, including:

- Stress or crisis management
- Work-related difficulties
- Relationship issues, including marital and family problems
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Life adjustments, or emotional concerns
- Medical problems
- Childcare or eldercare
- Legal, financial or education issues

The program is three-pronged. It offers telephone consultation, counseling and referral services, and an online repository of useful information.

The EAP service provides consultation and counseling appointments through a toll-free phone number, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The telephone number is (800) 869-0276.

Military members and their family members are entitled to four counseling sessions per separate incident/problem, per year, at no cost. While the number of sessions is limited, the number of 'problem' events is not limited.

Counseling sessions are completely confidential, within the bounds of the law. EAP Consultants, Inc. *does not* notify the command about an individual's specific use of the program.

If necessary, the EAP counselor will refer the person to other providers for extended counseling. Military members will be responsible for the cost of additional services. EAP Consultants, Inc. will assist in finding resources that are covered by insurance or meet a person's financial capabilities.

The program also offers

legal, financial and educational advice, and provides powers of attorney and simple wills at no cost.

The EAP Consultants, Inc. web site offers an abundance of information about personal, work, financial, and legal issues. Access the web site at <http://www.eapconsultants.com>. Choose "Member Access." Then, upon choosing "Legal/Financial Library," and "Log In," type in the passwords applicable to your unit's command affiliation: "HQs, Eastern or Western." Upon choosing "HELNET," type in Username "HQs, Eastern or Western" and password of "USMEPCOM". Upon choosing "Request for EAP Services," fill out the requested information. Upon choosing "EAP Employee Orientation," proceed to a briefing about their services.

Currently, the Human Resources Directorate is managing the command's use of the program. For further assistance, USMEPCOM personnel can call Maj. Gerald Claude at (847) 688-3680, ext. 7172. Also, they can contact Sector Support Group Chiefs: Maj. Terri Ashley in Eastern Sector at (847) 688-3680, ext. 7626 or Maj. Ruth Hamilton in Western Sector at (720) 374-0274, ext. 110. ■

Employee Assistance Program

<http://www.eapconsultants.com>

Telephone Consultation

(800) 869-0276

TTY (866) 951-8021

Seeing double

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
 Messenger Associate Editor

Maybe it was sort of like double vision at the Richmond MEPS recently, but it was more like identical vision. The Army got a two-for-one special recently when identical twins Shamika and Tamika Traynham

enlisted for a three-year tour.

The two sisters — who both said they do a lot of things together — jointly decided to go Army after talking to a recruiter who visited their school.



Identical twins Shamika and Tamika Traynham enlist in the Army's Delayed Entry Program, or DEP.

Both sisters said they used to try fooling friends by switching identities, but that hasn't worked since elementary school.

"They know our personalities now so we can't get away with it," Tamika said.

They won't be able to do it in the Army, either. Although the sisters raised their hands for a joint swearing, Tamika — who will graduate early from school — is set to hit basic training on March 25. Her sister, who graduates in May, will leave on Aug. 6.

Both will train to be cooks for Uncle Sam and his family.

"It was better than being a truck driver, and I like cooking," said Tamika. "I like cooking macaroni and cheese, but I never cooked for 300 people before."

Sounds like the two sisters may also share a fondness for sibling rivalry, because they both have an idea of who will do better in basic training.

So who does Shamika think will do better?

"Oh, I will," said Shamika. "Tamika is the more girlish type, and I'm more of a tomboy. I like the outdoors. I'll be able to handle it."

So who does Tamika think will do better?

"I think I will," said Tamika. "I have some friends going in with me, and I have a better sense of humor. I like to make people laugh."

Who will do better in the Army?

Maybe the question doesn't really matter. Both girls plan on seeing how the first three years go before they decide on a career. Either way, they plan on doing the best with their training. They plan to open a restaurant together in the future.

And who is the better cook?

We'll have to wait to answer that question.

A family affair

Avery Hamilton (center) poses with his dad (left) and his uncle, Benjamin Rios, a New Mexico state representative, after enlisting in the Army at the El Paso MEPS. Hamilton was sworn in by another uncle — Col. Jimmy R. Gomez, the chief of staff of the New Mexico Army National Guard.



They do and they did ... go Army

Steven Alvarez, a graduate of Jefferson High School and Malinda Alvarez, a graduate of Silva Magnet High School (right), met through their school's Junior ROTC programs. The two said "I do" and married on Aug. 10, then 18 days later, Steven left for Army basic training at Fort Sill, Okla. His wife left the next day for Army basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. The two processed through the El Paso MEPS.



Tampa pulls off 1,600-student 'mega test day'

“Teamwork made it all happen,” 2nd

Lt. Michael Horkay, Tampa MEPS test control officer, said, when asked about the number of students the MEPS tested Oct. 15.

Why so many? Florida requires all 10th grade students to take the PSAT. In marketing the ASVAB Career Exploration Program to the schools, Veronica Bistrovic, Tampa MEPS education services specialist, proposed that schools back up that test with the ASVAB for 11th and 12th grade students. This year five schools chose to do so. As a result, more than 1,600 juniors and seniors tested.

The “battle plan” devised by Horkay ensured that any and all unanticipated events would be addressed. Using a projected count of 3,000 students at five schools — four via closed-circuit television, plans moved along smoothly.

Each school’s needs were unique, but satisfactorily addressed. Since four of the schools would be testing via closed-circuit TV, they requested workshops for the teachers involved in the test.

Bistrovic prepared 100 briefing kits containing copies of the materials students would receive along with a “Multi-Room Testing Checklist.” Briefing dates were set up at the schools during the two weeks

prior to the test. MEPS staff members conducted the sessions. In the meantime, Jim Davisson, test coordinator, pursued the task of gathering enough recruiters to proctor the 83 classrooms involved in the multi-room test sessions, and the 160-student auditorium-style test.

As the day unfolded, it was evident that the pre-planning time had been well-spent. The recruiting partners came through.

All proctors were in place at the appointed times. All MEPS’ testing administrators were in the field at their assigned locations (including two military members on loan from the MEPS processing section), as well as Bistrovic and Lt. Cmdr. Johnna Marchant, Tampa MEPS commander.



Mega test day

Some of the MEPS staff who made it happen — (left to right) Sgt. Keisha Rodgers, Staff Sgt. Nica Smith, Staff Sgt. Patrick Clay, 2nd Lt. Michael Horkay, Sgt. Chad Buetler, Master Sgt. Bernadette Perez.

As the MEPS staff began to report back in to the MEPS in the afternoon, the test control officer and staff breathed a collective sigh of relief. Not only had they “done the deed,” but they ensured all the test booklets were back where they belonged — **in the vault at the MEPS!**

Miami celebrates new testing highs!

The Miami MEPS family joined with members of the Miami Interservice Recruitment Committee to celebrate a record year in Student Testing.

Miami achieved an all-time high of 152 schools tested in School Year 01-02, as compared to 141 in SY 00-01, 140 in SY 99-00, and 137 in SY 98-99. In reaching this milestone, the Miami MEPS-IRC-Office of Personnel Management team also accomplished its highest number of students tested — 17,654 in just 189 test sessions. This generated a total of 16,011 leads for the various armed services with no loss of test booklets and no school sessions processed as “Option 8”.

Lt. Cmdr. David Allen presided over the cake-cutting ceremony. In his remarks, he expressed his appreciation for the steadfast service provided by the numerous recruiter proctors supplied by the services, the test administrators made available by OPM, and of course, the motivated staff in the Miami MEPS Testing section. Specifically, Miami MEPS would like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of Dale Robinson, education services specialist; Debbie Gaitor, test coordinator; Staff Sgt. Metonya Baker, Testing NCOIC; Petty Officer 1st Class John Broughton, Petty Officer 2nd Class Nelson Anestor, Willie Hardy, test administrators; and Lt. Tanya Cook, Miami MEPS test control officer.

Miami MEPS staff members, recruiting commanders and



Time to Celebrate!

(Left to right) Lt. Cmdr. David Allen, Lt. Col. Dewitt Hathcock, Debbie Gaitor, Dale Robinson, and Cmdr. Tom Buterbaugh cut the cake to celebrate a record year in student testing.

education subcommittee members were on hand for the cake-cutting ceremony. Cmdr. Tom Buterbaugh, commander, Naval Recruiting District Miami, and Lt. Col. Dewitt Hathcock, joined together to cut the sheet cake which announced proudly that Miami MEPS had generated 16,011 leads in SY 01-02.

Dressed in civvies and ready to process—but they weren't typical applicants

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Sleepy-eyed they shuffled past the guard and up the stairs for another day of processing at the Houston MEPS. Clad in jeans, T-shirts, and tennis shoes, this wasn't your average group of applicants processing for boot camp.

They weren't typical at all. This group of "been-there-done-that-got-the-uniform-and-ID-to-prove-it" crowd, was actually the Houston MEPS getting a taste of their own medicine to find out what it was like Oct. 4, to be an applicant, and to learn about the different sections within the MEPS.

The role reversal training day was the idea of the first sergeant, after the new commander, Maj. Keith Coleman, told her he wanted to go through the process and experience the MEPS as an applicant.



Houston MEPS personnel gained an appreciation for both applicants and co-workers when they became 'applicants for a day' in a recent training exercise.

"And she said, 'Why don't we let everyone do it?'"

So on a day when no applicants were scheduled, the Houston MEPS personnel became the Houston MEPS applicants and went through every step in the processing process — including the early-morning arrival and every other stop along the way.

"We were just crazy applicants who didn't know anything," Coleman said.

At each stop, that section briefed the group on what to expect and how they did their job.

There were some obvious differences. The applicants normally aren't allowed to wear hats while processing, but the Houston MEPS livened the event with a crazy hat contest, and a Jeopardy game to see how well everyone was paying attention to the training.

Besides giving everyone an appreciation for what it's like to be an applicant, it gave them an idea of what their co-workers do as well.

"Everyone in each section always thinks their job is harder than someone else's job, and their job is so much easier," Coleman said. "People who work in Ops don't know what the people in medical do, and the people in medical don't know what the people in Ops do. Now everyone sees that each section plays a critical role."

Petty Officer 2nd Class Martin Fields, who works in testing, said the day was an "eye opener" for him.

"It really snaps you back to reality," said the Navy veteran who first processed through a MEPS seven years ago. "You see it on a daily basis, but you don't get the full effect of it. It reminded me a lot of what I went through the first time, and how tedious it can be."

And Coleman was reminded of how hard some of that processing can actually be.

"That duck walk thing? It was easier 22 years ago!"

Lansing takes flight with Black Hawk

No one ever said training has to be on the ground. The Lansing MEPS held an Oct. 4 training day at the Grand Ledge Air National Guard unit. The team sat through classroom safety presentations, ate a Hispanic luncheon, and then took Black Hawk helicopter flights over the city.

Each 30-minute flight took the staff over the State Capital Building, Michigan State University, and the downtown Lansing area.



MEPS Dossier

*Introducing those who
work around us*

Western Sector



Tech. Sgt. Shawn Jenkins
Testing NCOIC
Seattle MEPS

Hometown: Portland, Ore.

Years in the military: 17

One thing many of his friends don't know about him: "Well, there was that one time when a small group of us were spending a long weekend at the beach and ... oops, never mind ..."

Hobbies: Spending time with his kids, baseball and softball, and the occasional woodworking project.

What he considers his single-most important achievement thus far in life: "Raising children that are happy, loving and respectful."

Last book he read: "Leadership," by Rudolph Giuliani

Motto he lives by: "Never give up."

Times per year he changes his hairstyle: "Considering I haven't changed it in the last 17 years, I'd have to say the answer is zero."

His favorite pair of shoes: "My sandals, because that means it is summer."

One food he can't live without: Apple pie.

Who is the greatest person he has met in life and why: "It's two people. My mom and dad, because they have always been there to support and guide me and my family."

If he was an entertainer, he would be: "A singer and guitar player."

If he was an animal, he would be: An eagle.

If he was a car, he would be: "A quad cab 4x4 truck. It's a work horse with enough room for everyone and their gear."

Taxes — early or late?: "Usually the last minute."



Dallas military members get hero's salute

With a school theme of "Signs of Courage," the Brandenburg Elementary School invited several military members to a special presentation Sept. 19 to honor America's heroes.

The special day was set up to honor men and women in uniform, and included the military troops, firemen, policemen, doctors, and nurses.

Participants from the Dallas MEPS included Lt. Col. David Lambert; Senior Master Sgt. Patricia Sonntag; Staff Sgt. Caprecia Miller; Staff Sgt. Diane Pavia; and Petty Officers 2nd Class Nicholas Berry and Darren Axtell

"It was a wonderful experience," said Miller, "I really enjoy working with kids, and when we walked in, there eyes got big and they said, 'Wow!' They wanted to know what we did, what our rank was, and it was a lot of fun."

Fifth graders from the school serenaded all the "heroes" with several songs, including "You Are Our Heroes." Then everyone sang "The Star Spangled Banner."

And it wasn't just the children who were excited, Miller said.

"Everyone wanted to take our pictures, and everyone was excited. It was like we were celebrities."



Special re-enlistment in Richmond

Richmond MEPS Commander, Maj. Gregory Bauldrick re-enlists Sgt. Edward Vargas at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Va., adjacent to the Governor's Mansion, overlooking the James River. Vargas will transfer to Germany for his next assignment.

Processing 'under the hoops' at Fort Jackson

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

The basketball rims are still there, and one of them still has its net. But don't think about shooting hoops at the Fort Jackson MEPS.

The place may be smaller than the usual digs — 21,000 square feet smaller, give or take — and those echoes in the orthopedic area could be heard because it's in an old racquetball court, but the men and women of the MEPS are making due in the old gymnasium until their refurbished building is ready in July 2004.

Still, it hasn't come without some growing pains, said the MEPS commander, Maj. Dan Lucas.

"We still have people who show up and think it's a gym," he chuckled. "Usually, once a day, people come in to play basketball."

What they find, instead, is an old gymnasium at Fort Jackson which has been converted into a temporary MEPS where as many as 100 applicants process in a day.

"And we're not talking partitions," Lucas said. "There was a lot of work done. There are walls, and offices."

And water fountains! This is an old gymnasium, after all.

"I actually have one of those in my office," Lucas said. "But it doesn't work."

The MEPS crew didn't move into the gym to improve their collective PT scores. Their actual building was in bad need of repair, but the MEPS couldn't shut down and send the excess applicants elsewhere. So first, USMEPCOM paid to have the gym converted,



An applicant waiting area in Fort Jackson MEPS' temporary facilities — a Fort Jackson gymnasium.

and the Fort Jackson MEPS crew moved in Nov. 8 through 10, then reopened Nov. 12 for business. While processing is going on, their old building "is being completely gutted," Lucas said, and the end result will be a state-of-the-art processing center. The total bill for the gym renovation and gutting and revamping of the old building is about \$5.5 million. ➔

San Antonio reaps great rewards with move

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

The San Antonio MEPS move last summer from an office building squeezed between two freeways, to a smaller former hospital at Fort Sam Houston, cost more than \$400,000, but officials said that will pay for itself within a year, and save the command hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Before the move, the MEPS leased office space in a building sandwiched between one of San Antonio's busiest intersections, at a cost of \$695,965 a year. The initial set-up at the new digs cost \$22,000 for movers, plus \$381,000 for furniture. The only future costs will be to cover the post support agreement for utilities and such.

"The move went very well, and it was a seamless transition," said the San Antonio MEPS Commander, Lt. Cmdr. Pat Williams. "We moved at the height of summer surge. We're putting 100 applicants through daily, and that jumps to about 127 in the summer. And we did it without missing a beat."

There was almost no disruption to the applicant flow, she said, and it helped that

the MEPS got a high-level visit a week after setting up at its new location. After processing applicants all day June 6, the MEPS closed shop the next day so the official move could begin.

"We had a few from work that night — the ones you can never kick out of here," Williams said. "And we had about 12 movers, and three or four of those big trucks."

Unlike normal military moves where the trucks have months to get to their destination, the stuff in those trucks had to be at Fort Sam Houston the next day. The entire staff of 50 had worked in shifts Friday to set up everything.

Then seven days later, the MEPS got a visit from then Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, Lt. Gen. John Van Alstyne.

"He told me he expected to be stepping over paint cans and buckets, but we were motivated to make it presentable. When he showed up, he said it looked like we had already been in the building for months."

While the space itself is tighter — and spread across three floors — Williams said the facility is in top shape. The MEPS is also

hoping to get more space in the basement of the building.

Despite the smaller space, the move comes with more benefits than disadvantages, said 2nd Lt. Dawn Standridge, test control officer.

"There's definitely more security," she said. "Plus, if you need to get some ribbons or a badge (for your uniform) it's just around the corner, if you need to stop at the commissary on the way home, it's right there. You don't have to make a big plan to get something."

There's also a state-of-the-art gym with an Olympic-sized pool, and a running track located close by, Williams said, and that will give military members more opportunity to stay in shape.

"I also think bringing the applicants onto a military base presents a more regal experience for them," said Standridge, who spent three years as an enlisted member. "When I first joined, it was in a federal building, and I didn't get to see what the military was like. This presents the applicants with a whole different experience." ■

Fort Jackson hoops

"The previous facility was extremely antiquated — it was like chewing gum and Band-Aids were keeping it going," Lucas said. "We had problems with heating, with air conditioning, and the building was crumbling around us. But we knew what the long-range plan was and what we were going to get."

Lucas admitted there was some consternation with moving into a gym, "particularly because people at the MEPS couldn't get in here to see what they were doing, and didn't see it until it was done. I think everyone was pleasantly surprised."

The office that once housed the gym staff, is now the files room. Orthopedic and neurological exams are in the racquetball courts. Medical records are kept in the weight room, and that's where applicants also take their hearing tests. The basketball hoops are still in the gym, but they're shackled to the ceiling.

"There are some shortcomings (to working in a gym)," Lucas said. "I'm at one end of the gym, and I can hear what is going on at the other. So we all have to be good neighbors and respect everyone else."

Navy Lt. Sharon Graham, operations officer, said that means cell phones are banned, everyone has to have their phone on the lowest setting, using the speaker phone is a big no-no, and everyone has to speak in a quieter voice.

"And if you want to vent about someone, you have to go for a walk," she laughed.

"That's true," said Sgt. 1st Class Wanda Redd, a processing NCO. "There aren't a lot of ceilings, so if I'm talking about Lieutenant Graham, she hears everything I say!"

"I heard that," Graham said in the background.

The Navy lieutenant was one of the few people involved in the planning of the move, and said the gym wasn't the first or best choice when funding became available, but it was the only choice.

"We couldn't shut down," she said. "I don't think Charlotte or Jacksonville (MEPS) would appreciate getting our workload."

"The applicants don't really realize how tight it is first thing in the morning, but by the afternoon, you can tell it's crowded. We do the best we can."

While conditions are tight, she said the MEPS crew has learned to work in synchronized fashion, and anticipate any problems. When the CAT-ASVAB is given, for instance, others in the building know to try to keep noise to a minimum.

It helps that the MEPS appears to be a tight-knit group. Lucas gave credit to his team for pulling together and working hard to turn even a renovated gym into a passable temporary office space.

"They get all the credit," he said. "They put things on the walls we have, and during the holiday decorating contest, they went all the way out. The work they have done is phenomenal."

"We have a great group of people, so I'm not surprised that we do well here," said Redd, the processing NCO. "You could put us in any situation, and we'd do great."

Now if only other people on the post would know it's now a MEPS.

"A couple a guys came in just yesterday wanting to know when we opened so they could play basketball," Redd added. "I was tempted to say 5:30, but only if they wore their gym shoes."

While she and the others said they make do, they're looking forward to the day in July 2004 when they can reclaim their old building, but the longer they stay in the gym, they can't help but wonder about a few things.

"I think I can make a basket from (my desk)," Redd said. "One of them still has a net. I think we could get a game together, but they won't tell us where the switch is to lower the hoops." ■

MEPS Dossier

*Introducing those who work
around us*

Eastern Sector



Petty Officer 1st Class Keith Proctor

Medical NCOIC

Beckley MEPS

Hometown: Lakeland, Fla.

Years in the military: 17

One thing many of his friends don't know about him: "I like classical music and the opera."

Hobbies: Gardening and home improvement

What he considers his single-most important achievement thus far in life: "Acceptance into both medical schools that I applied to."

Three things that can always be found in his refrigerator: "Nothing. My son is a high school senior on the football team."

Last book he read: "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Dr. Spencer Johnson

Motto he lives by: "Don't find a fault; find a remedy." — Henry Ford

One food he can't live without: "Peanut butter"

If stranded on a deserted island with just a boom box (and a lot of batteries), he'd choose three CDs: Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture", Alison Kraus "So Long, So Wrong", and Sam Levine's "Sax for the Spirit"

If he could have lunch with any person from history, who would it be and what would he ask him: "Abraham Lincoln. I would ask him how he dealt with all of the adversity."

If he were a car, he would be: "A pickup truck because it epitomizes usefulness."

When does he do taxes?: "Early. I like to get my refund quickly."

Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Military Personnel Policy visits New York MEPS

Mr. Bill Carr visited the New York MEPS on a fact-finding tour Nov. 20.

Carr is assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, serving as the Acting Deputy Under Secretary (Military Personnel Policy). He oversees recruiting, retention, compensation, and related human resource management for the 1.4 million active duty members of the U.S. Armed Services.

New York MEPS personnel gave briefings on all areas of military processing to Carr. Cmdr. Timothy Garrold, New York MEPS commander, gave him an overview briefing of MEPS operations. Next, Medical NCOIC, Master Sgt. David Robinson briefed him on medical operations and processing. Following that, Capt. Jolie Erickson, test control officer, briefed him on testing operations and procedures. Lastly, Lt. Juan Suero, operations officer, briefed Carr on MEPS operations.

During the lunch hour, the Fort Hamilton Garrison Commander, Col. Kewyn Williams met Carr and gave him a briefing and window tour of the installation.



During his visit to the New York MEPS Nov. 20, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Military Personnel Policy, Mr. Bill Carr (center) discusses MEPS issues with (left to right) Master Sgt. David Robinson, New York MEPS Medical NCOIC, Eastern Sector Commander, Col. Alan Dodson, and (far right) Cmdr. Timothy Garrold, New York MEPS Commander.

National Observances

March: Women's History Month

April: Month of the Military Child

May: Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Sept. 15 - Oct. 15: Hispanic American Heritage Month

November: National American Indian Heritage Month

Memorable first visit for all

Making good on his goal of visiting all the MEPS within his first months on the job, USMEPCOM Commander, Col. David Slotwinski hit the road soon after taking command, and his first stop was the Harrisburg MEPS.

The commander spent the night at the same hotel as the applicants to get the feel of enlisting from the applicant's perspective.

The commander ate breakfast with the future troops, chatted with applicants, and checked out transportation to the Harrisburg station. His visit also included a tour of the MEPS and service liaisons. One of the highlights of the day was when he enlisted several young Americans. Dalin Chen enlisted in the Air Force; Tanya Weikel in the Army, and Adam Herring in the Navy.



USMEPCOM Commander, Col. David Slotwinski congratulates Tanya Weikel after she enlisted in the Army's Delayed Entry Program.



New York Color Guard at Jets game

The New York MEPS Joint Service Color Guard presented the Colors at the New York Jets football game during their Military Appreciation Day recognition. (Left to right) Army Sgt. Ruel Lopez, Testing Section, Sgt. 1st Class Hernandez, Army National Guard Liaison, Army Sgt. Matthew Francis, Front Desk, Marine Corps Sgt. Johnny Rodriguez, Operations (NCOIC, Joint Color Guard), Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Stephen Heath, Medical Section, Matthew Gruber, Medical Section, Chief Petty Officer Funderburk, Coast Guard Recruiting Office, and Marine Corps Sgt. David Stokes, Testing Section.

New York med techs help in an emergency

New York MEPS Medical Technicians, Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul Alde and Ramon Lagunzad quickly went to help a construction worker who was struck by a bulldozer on a street adjacent to the MEPS, on Fort Hamilton Army Garrison.

Alde was working in the medical lab, near the window on the third floor of the MEPS, when he heard a loud, breaking sound from the street, about 75 feet away. When he looked out the window and saw a man lying on the street, he immediately headed toward the accident scene. Lagunzad joined him. At the scene, Alde began giving first aid to the victim.

The man was allegedly riding on the front of the dozer when he slipped and fell off the vehicle. The driver immediately applied the breaks of the vehicle to avoid running over him. An ambulance service responded and transported the man to a local hospital.



New York MEPS Medical Technicians, Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul Alde (right) and Ramon Lagunzad continue to help a man who was injured by a bulldozer at Fort Hamilton Army Garrison.

Chicago MEPS helps restore natural habitat

If you haven't visited the Chicago MEPS, you may envision a station located in the heart of the "Windy City." Not so. The Chicago MEPS is located in one of the city's suburbs, Des Plaines, Ill. With this in mind it's easier to understand that, on their last training day, MEPS personnel moved outside to volunteer a day's labor at the Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary, located in nearby Schaumburg, Ill.

The Sanctuary is dedicated to restoring 135 acres to native habitats — in prairies, forests and a marshland. The Chicago MEPS volunteers lent their muscle to eradicate non-native, invasive plants, primarily buckthorn and box elder. Armed with small saws and a wood chipping machine, the team cleared a forest area of the noxious plants. Staff members not able to contribute physical labor assisted with administrative tasks in the park's volunteer office.

MEPS volunteers were rewarded with a tour of the Volkening Heritage Farm, and lunch from the farmhouse's 19th century kitchen.

"Helping the community has two benefits," said Chicago 1st Sgt. Tammy Shaver-Perry. "First, it gives back to the local community — boosting the Armed Forces reputation as good neighbors. Second, it allows us to build our MEPS team. Working in



The Chicago MEPS crew.

an environment outside the MEPS intermingles sections into different teams to accomplish a mission."

Chicago MEPS personnel have reached out to the community through a local school program, with the Boy Scouts, through Toys for Tots and blood drives, and the Adopt-A Highway Program.



Pittsburgh Day of Caring

The Pittsburgh MEPS has an annual tradition of several military and civilian staff members volunteering their off-duty time to assist with Pittsburgh's annual Day of Caring. This year's Day of Caring benefited the United Way Asthma Walk.

Pittsburgh MEPS personnel joined others and donated their time, labor, and money to the cause.

Pittsburgh MEPS members who participated in a Day of Caring include (kneeling, left to right) Petty Officer 2nd Class Weinmann, Sgt. Greene, Sgt. Fabian, and Sgt. Durden, (standing, left to right) Francine Brach, Staff Sgt. Jackson, Maj. Lester Moore, Sgt. Jackson, Staff Sgt. Parks, and Sharon Brunish.

Los Angeles education services specialist is an 'aficionados practico' as a bullfighter

By Petty Officer 1st Class
Todd "Scoop" Hansen
Public Affairs, HQ USMEPCOM

Sal Sapien says his co-workers at the Los Angeles MEPS think he's crazy. Sapien even calls himself an *aficionados practico*, which translates to, "crazy amateur." When he isn't visiting high schools in the L.A. area administering, promoting and interpreting the ASVAB Testing Program, the 64-year-old education services specialist can be found enjoying his hobby of bullfighting.

Sapien was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and grew up in Juarez, Mexico. He served in the Air Force from 1959 to 1964 as a combat photographer. In 2001, he retired as the vice principal of Huntington Beach High School, after 32 years with the school system. He was named civilian of the year at the Southern California Recruiting Battalion.

Sapien took up bullfighting in the early 1970s. "I basically started when I spent a year in Spain and ran with the bulls twice in Pamplona in 1971," he recalled. "My co-workers think I'm crazy and they worry about me when I participate."

Imelda Rodriguez, a testing coordinator who has been working with Sapien for a year at the MEPS, is one of those who worries a bit about his extracurricular activities.

"He is a wonderful man and a lot of fun to be around. He has a fatherly per-



When he's not busy as the Los Angeles MEPS education services specialist, Sal Sapien travels to Mexico and Spain to participate in bullfighting, his hobby of about 30 years.

sonality toward us co-workers. It is very evident that his care is genuine," she mentioned. "Sal also has that same type of caring attitude toward the applicants he administers the ASVAB tests to in the L.A. area.

But it is Sapien's caring attitude and amiable traits that make the thought of his bullfighting hobby that much more difficult for Rodriguez to handle.

"It (his bullfighting) scares me.

He is such a nice guy — like a father — and I don't want him to get hurt or injured," she stressed. "That is why we don't talk much about it in the office. He knows from the concerned frown on my face that it worries me when he brings up the topic. When he does participate in a bullfighting event

on the weekend, I always tell him that I want to see him back in the office healthy on Monday."

As dangerous as the sport of bullfighting can be, Sapien says he has been lucky over the years not to be injured badly.

"I've had some memorable experiences through the years," he noted. "The most notable being a small bull missing my groin area by about half an inch. I was very thankful for the miss but the bull still left a nasty bump on my inner thigh."

Sapien has participated in bullfighting in Tecate, Mexico, and Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico. Next year he plans on traveling to Salamanca, Spain, with his fellow *aficionados practicos* to take part in his hobby. Sapien competes in bullfighting on the weekends and holidays as to not interfere with his work schedule at the MEPS.

"I have a great time getting together with fellow crazy amateurs here in San Diego and practicing bullfighting," he mentioned. "I'll tell you what though — be it practice or be it an actual event, the adrenaline rush of being one-on-one with a bull in the ring is fantastic!" ■



Sal Sapien (far right) and his fellow 'aficionados practicos.'

Flying pig helps produce very chocolate cake

Nothing is impossible — especially when there's chocolate involved. Just ask Betty Scheider and Linda Hall of the Knoxville MEPS.

Betty, a human resources specialist, is one of the well-known kitchen talents at Knoxville, and she recently brought in a cookbook to share with the staff. The book contained a most delicious-looking-but-very-complicated recipe for something called Very, Very Chocolate Cake.

It looked so good, Scheider's colleagues asked her to make it, but a week went by and no cake.

"When are you going to make that cake?" her friend, Linda, asked.

"When pigs fly!" Betty replied.

The next morning, when Betty arrived at work, she was greeted by a pig flying around her desk, and it stayed there until she made the cake.

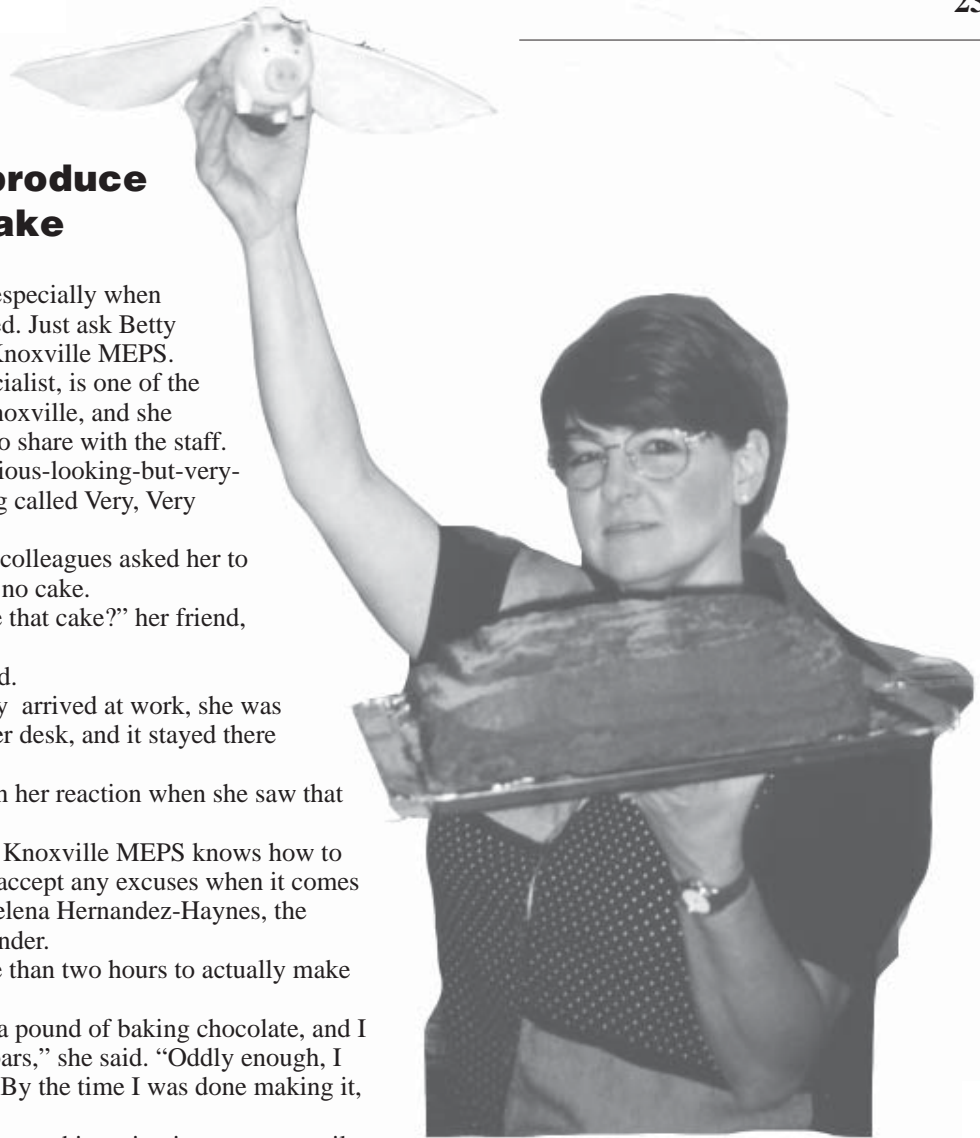
"I wished you could have seen her reaction when she saw that pig!" Hall said.

"It only goes to show that the Knoxville MEPS knows how to get what we want, and we don't accept any excuses when it comes to delicious food!" said Cmdr. Selena Hernandez-Haynes, the former Knoxville MEPS commander.

Scheider said it took her more than two hours to actually make the cake.

"That's because there is over a pound of baking chocolate, and I had to shave something like 16 bars," she said. "Oddly enough, I didn't even get to taste the cake. By the time I was done making it, I was tired of it."

As for that recipe, anyone interested in trying it out can e-mail Scheider at KnoxMpco3@mepcom.army.mil



Betty Scheider displays her work of art chocolate cake, and the flying pig that made her do it.



Little Rock celebrates its new facility

USMEPCOM Commander, Col. David Slotwinski and the Honorable Vic Snyder, U.S. representative, Arkansas 2nd District, cut the ribbon at the Little Rock MEPS grand opening Nov. 15. Little Rock MEPS Commander, Maj. Brian England (at left).

Headquarters 'longtimers' retire

By Christine Parker
Messenger Editor

There are a few "labels" we give people who've been around an organization for a long time, names like plankholder, longtimer, lynchpin. Some of those words may not be in the dictionary, but we know what they mean, and we use them anyway.

In December and January, four such people retired from Headquarters, USMEPCOM — the Command Liaison, Monte Froman, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Terrance Tiernan, Information Technology Specialist, Betty Lyerly, and Civilian Personnel Officer, Charlie Sangerman. And, although the majority of their service was not in USMEPCOM, two other "longtimers" retired recently as well — Robert Shear and Master Sgt. Christopher Thompson.

Froman worked in federal service for 40 years, 22 in USMEPCOM; Tiernan worked in federal service for 20 years, 10 with the command; Sangerman worked in federal service 30 years, 21 in USMEPCOM; and Lyerly worked for more than 12 years in the command.

Shear dedicated 32 years to federal service, and worked in USMEPCOM since 1999. Thompson retired after 22 years in the Army, 9 of which he spent in USMEPCOM.



Monte Froman

In speaking at Froman's retirement ceremony, USMEPCOM Chief of Staff Maurice Buchanan said, "He was the consummate liaison officer, connected, an effective coordinator, communicator, conveyer of command intent. He was a team player, and he always protected command credibility."

Since March 1998, Monte Froman was the USMEPCOM Liaison on the staff of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, Accession Policy Directorate, located at the Pentagon.

"The only way to make it in the Pentagon is to keep your sense of humor," Froman often said. "Otherwise you might take too many things personally." Froman didn't begin his career there, however.

He enlisted in the Air Force in 1962 and had tours of duty in Florida, Scotland, England, Illinois, and finally Missouri. He was medically retired from the Air Force in 1974, and began working for the Internal Revenue Service as a GS-2 seasonal tax examiner in 1975.

A few months later he began his association with

USMEPCOM when he took the job of lead military personnel clerk at the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station in Kansas City, Mo. At that time AFEES belonged to the U.S. Army Recruiting Command.

In 1978, while at the AFEES, Monte was selected as the first USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year. In an effort to improve his chances for advancement, he accepted a management assistant, GS-7 position at Headquarters, USMEPCOM, in the Information Management Directorate in 1979. There he was promoted three times before his promotion to the liaison position.

After surviving the Sept. 11 attack on the Pentagon, and the recent beltway sniper attacks, Froman said, "I thought it was time to move somewhere peaceful with a little less stress. The D.C. area is where the local news is world news. I've never gotten used to Eastern Standard Time anyway."

Froman and his wife Aleta, another longtime USMEPCOM employee, will begin the next phase of their life in Decatur, Ill. "Decatur is close to my sister and brother-in-law and half way between the grandchildren. It's surrounded by corn, wheat, and soybean fields. And there's nothing like watching corn grow."

The Fromans plan to do some remodeling of their new house, and Monte wants to do some "serious woodworking." When asked if he will be looking for employment, he said, "If an offer comes along that piques my interest, I might take it, but I'm not in a big hurry either."



Terrance Tiernan

Terrance, better known as "Terry" Tiernan is a Marine veteran who retired after 20 years of federal service, the last 10 at USMEPCOM, and the other 10 at USAREC.

"His contributions have been characterized by professionalism, dedication, loyalty and endless energy," Buchanan said at Tiernan's retirement ceremony.

At the age of 17, Tiernan began serving three years in the 1st Marine Division. He began his work in the accession community 20 years ago when he worked at USAREC. There he was involved in ARADS system development, instrumental in their mainframe move to Indianapolis, and spearheaded the Information Technology move to Fort Knox, Ky., before taking a position in USMEPCOM's Resource Management Directorate.

At USMEPCOM, he was a key player in many IT projects, including the MEPCOM Integrated Resource System. At that time, the USMEPCOM commander made him MIRS project manager. Tiernan was also involved in the successful Y2K planning and championed the command's inclusion in USAREC's RSN. ➔

"He was a very capable and aggressive Information Management director who was not afraid to change or take measured risks — a true leader," Buchanan said.

Those who know Tiernan are aware of his love of golf and auto racing. Obviously he'll have more time for those efforts upon his retirement. He plans to remain in the area with his wife Margery and their family. ■



Betty Lyerly

Betty Lyerly was an information technology specialist in the IT Directorate.

She began her civilian career at Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Ill., in 1961, and worked for the federal government on and off since then. She worked across the nation — Bureau of Naval Personnel, Washington, D.C.; Service School Command, Great Lakes; Naval Amphibious Base, Norfolk, Va.; Recruit Training Command, Orlando, Fla.; and Veterans Affairs Hospital, Birmingham, Ala. She began working at USMEPCOM in 1989.

Lyerly received two Achievement Medals for Civilian Service, was named Civilian of the Quarter twice, and was Headquarters Civilian of the Year in 2000.

On a personal note, Betty and her husband Kenneth were married in 1961. They have two daughters, one son and two grandsons. She earned an associate degree in Computer Information Systems and will continue her education at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, with the goal of becoming a clinical pastor for a local hospital. ■



Robert Shear

Robert Shear was the director of Resource Management since 1999, and retired in January. He had served in federal positions since 1970.

Beginning in that year, he held budget and management positions at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., Camp Carroll, Korea, and Fort Lee, Va. In 1983, he took the position of deputy director, RM, Fort Eustis, Va., and in 1987, he became deputy director, RM, at Fort Sill, Okla. In 1996, in his last position before coming to USMEPCOM, he was director, RM, at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Shear earned a bachelor's degree from Baker University, Baldwin, Kan., in 1967, and a master's degree from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va., in 1983.

Shear and his wife plan on returning to WildeWood, S.C.

The Shears have two adult sons, and one granddaughter.

"Mr. Shear was a supervisor who wasn't afraid to speak his mind, but he did it with tact and diplomacy," said Linda Hoover, who worked directly for him.

"He was caring; concerned about not only the work environment, but also making sure things on the home front were going well. His sense of humor was off beat, but it never failed to bring laughter and warmth." ■



Charlie Sangerman

For the past 18 years, Charles "Charlie" Sangerman was the USMEPCOM Civilian Personnel Officer. Also, he spent three years as a personnel management specialist in the command, for a combined total of 21 years.

He began his government career as a library technician for the United States Army Veterinary School, Fort Sheridan, Ill., in 1972. After holding that position for a year, he entered the personnel field as a position classification specialist for Headquarters, Fort Sheridan, and worked in the same capacity at Naval Training Center, Great Lakes. Also, he was a supervisory classification specialist, and, later, chief of Manpower for the Chicago District, Army Corps of

Engineers, before joining USMEPCOM.

Sangerman earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in American History from Illinois College, and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Roosevelt University.

Sangerman doesn't have any specific plans for the future, but said he plans on "going home to vegitate."

About his time at the command, he said, "It's been a blast!" ■



Master Sgt. Christopher Thompson

Master Sgt. Christopher Thompson retired from the Army after 22 years of service. During his tenure at Headquarters, USMEPCOM, he was the senior Army personnel management NCOIC, Headquarters Company First Sergeant, and a personnel administration specialist.

Nine years before coming to Headquarters, Thompson was assigned to the Houston MEPS as an operations specialist and unit clerk. In May 1992, he was selected to serve as a drill sergeant. Following that, he was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Division, and 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Division in Schweinfurt, Germany. ■

Marine rescues teen-agers, guards home from fire

By Jenefer Becker
Butte MEPS Public Affairs Representative

To hear Marine Sgt. Roberta Petrokovitch's side of the story, what she did in the early hours of July 1 in Butte, Montana, was no big thing; it was nothing that anyone else wouldn't have done.

"Everybody is making a bigger deal about this than it needs to be," said the operations specialist from the Butte MEPS who is now being hailed as a hero.

Not so, said Bob Armstrong, the chief of the Silver Bow Country Fire Department.

"Had she not acted when she did, and had that fire not been called in, it would have taken out the whole works," he said.

The American Red Cross named Petrokovitch a "Hero of the Southwest" in a special Sept. 11 ceremony.

But Petrokovitch — or Sgt. P as her colleagues call her — insists she's no hero, and what she did on that July day was nothing out of the ordinary.

While driving to work at 4:30 a.m., she saw smoke billowing from a nearby home.

"At first I didn't know what it was. People do some strange things in Butte. Maybe people were barbecuing. It wouldn't be unusual for someone to be barbecuing at 4 in the morning."

Then she saw the flames licking out of a garage and dangerously close to a parked car. She pulled her white Ford Explorer

truck to the side of the road and reached for her cell phone.

"Except I didn't have it," she said. "I always forget my cell phone."

With flames licking out of a garage, and close to a parked car, Petrokovitch pounded on the front door of the house, and the next-door neighbor.



Sgt. Roberta Petrokovitch receives the Hero Award from the American Red Cross recently for helping in an emergency situation, and rescuing teens who were sleeping in a home with its garage on fire. Petty Officer 2nd Class Bob Carroll speaks at the podium.

"I finally woke up the neighbor and got her to call 911," Petrokovitch said.

But she couldn't wake the people inside the house.

"We have a lot of hunters in Montana and you never know when someone has a gun," she said. "I yelled in the house, 'I'm coming in. Don't shoot me.'"

Petrokovitch found three teen-agers inside, sleeping soundly. She later found out their parents were out of town.

"They were kind of dazed and groggy when I woke them up. I guess they weren't used to having a female Marine yelling at them to get out of bed," Petrokovitch said.

After getting the children out of the house, she and the neighbor tried putting out the fire with a garden hose until the fire department and police arrived. The garage burned to the ground, but the house was saved.

Armstrong said the fire was started in a trash can and ruled an arson. He said there have been at least six such blazes started in that area in the last year.

After talking with police and the fire department, Petrokovitch continued to work.

"And I still got there on time, believe it or not," she said with a laugh. "I told my captain, 'If I stink, I'm sorry, this is what happened.'"

Word quickly got back to her commander, Maj. Steve Turner, the Butte MEPS commander, and he made sure she

was nominated for the hero award from the American Red Cross.

"It didn't surprise me when I found out what she did," Turner said. "She's a go-forward-and-take-initiative kind of person."

But don't tell that to Petrokovitch. She'll just give you a nervous laugh and tell you again, "It was no big deal."

NCO integrity is non-negotiable *(continued from page 10)*

or earlier just because someone isn't looking or because there's nothing else to do? There's nothing wrong with leaving at the end of a hard day of work, but if you're in the middle of a job, a task, or a mission, you don't just leave. If you're so wrapped up in looking at the clock so you can be the first one out the front door at 4:30, then you aren't putting your effort where it needs to be — your job. And when you're not putting all into your job, then you are lacking in one area of integrity. Just because someone isn't looking over your shoulder doesn't mean you shouldn't be giving 100 percent each day.

When you put on that uniform, you're not just another gov-

ernment employee. You are a leader and a member of the U.S. military and that must be reflected in all your actions.

Do the right thing. Keep your integrity. And if you're lacking — and those of you who are already know it — then transform yourself. Make maintaining your integrity a lifelong commitment.

Editor's Note: USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Advisor, Sgt. Maj. Alfonso Villa wrote this article before his Feb. 12 retirement. The next issue of the Messenger will introduce USMEPCOM's new senior enlisted advisor. ■

Houston remembers co-worker, friend

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Toni Darby
Houston MEPS Public Affairs Representative

All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.
—Antole France

As our brother's keeper, we at Houston MEPS would like to take this time to honor the memory of Orlando Lamar Hinton, who passed away recently. Those who knew him well have shed many tears, but these tears will never truly express how sorely he will be missed.

Hinton served as the lead medical technician at Houston MEPS for more than 20 years. In his time here, his presence had become a reassuring constant. Despite his recent personal battles with ill health, he never complained and showed great dedication to his job.

He was always efficient and could be counted on to complete a job quickly and correctly. If he did not know the answer, he would research the problem and return with a solution. He joked with the applicants, creating a relaxed atmosphere for those who may have been nervous.

Hinton had a great passion for music. In fact, it was a guarantee that you would find him with his MP3 player on or close by; loaded with a new band that he had discovered via the Internet. Also, he had a great love of photography, movies, and computers, and he was always willing to share his knowledge with others.

Those of us who knew him will remember that he always offered a smile. He was supportive, kind and always spoke well of others.

"He was the calm in the eye of a hurricane," said a co-worker.

Hinton played softball. On one occasion, he dove for a line drive. An audible crack announced to everyone that the dive resulted in a fractured arm.

"Dude, I think you broke your arm," someone said.

"Yep, it's broken."

"Does it hurt?" they asked.

"A little bit," he calmly stated in his laid back manner.

Looking back on the times they spent with Hinton, "I don't think anything ever fazed him," the co-worker said.

A person could probably best describe Hinton with these seven famous words, "Walk softly, and carry a big stick."

RECOGNITIONS



Ora Johnston, left, displays her plaque for winning Federal Woman of the Year, along with the two other nominees from Pittsburgh, Cheryl Beeman and Staff Sgt. Maurita Parks.

More than a personnel clerk, she's woman of the year

By Sgt. Kotas Jackson
Pittsburgh MEPS
Public Affairs Representative

The Pittsburgh MEPS was well represented at the city-wide 2002 Federal Women of the Year awards ceremony, with three nominees and one taking home top honors.

Ora Johnston, a military personnel clerk at the MEPS since February 2001, was named Woman of the Year in the support staff category. Other nominees were Cheryl Beeman, a finalist in the professional category; and Staff Sgt. Maurita Parks in the technical category.

The Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board gives the awards annually to those women "who have exemplified a high degree of character, job interest and performance, and have substantially contributed to women in the federal government."

"I'm thankful I won. It meant a lot to me," said Johnston, the mother of Tiffany, age 7; and Andrew, 3. "I don't know why I won, or why I was put in for the award. I guess they thought I was good at my job."

Johnston was recognized for training two new clerks, and improving customer service at the MEPS even though there was a staff shortage. She began working at the MEPS as an intern while working on her associate's degree, and is now working toward her bachelor's in public administration.

Going home

After three decades, and time in the 'cool room,' MEPS member calls it a day

By Barbara Dall
Sacramento MEPS

Back when most moms and dads were playing Beach Boy lullabies to their children, and desktop computers were more of a sci-fi fantasy than a workplace reality, Sheila Alvarez started her civil service career. And now after more than three decades, the systems administrator called it a day, and retired and moved to her hometown of Fresno, Calif., after 33 years on the job.

"I figured it was time after those 30-some years," she said. "I made a lot of friends — real friends, and not just friends because you work there. But now I'm ready to do something new."

Her first 11 years of service were spent at the Naval Air Station in Lemoore, Calif., where she was a data entry clerk, and later became responsible for the civilian payroll on the entire base.

During that time she was also a peripheral equipment operator, responsible for data entry for ordering aircraft parts, and then did three years as a supply technician.

Alvarez moved to the no-longer-there Fresno MEPS in 1983 as the "MAG card operator." For those new to USMEPCOM, that was data entry before System 80, and before MIRS, the MEPCOM Integrated Resource System.

Some might have called this the "Ice Age." That's when the equipment had to be in a very cold room.

After freezing in that room for eight years, Alvarez returned to NAS Lemoore, where the desert sands were calling her to the warmer, more comfortable supply job.

This time it only lasted a year.

"I had to drive in the fog quite a ways to get there," she said, "and I had to get up very, very early."



Sheila Alvarez

So to MEPS she returned in August 1990 — not the cold room this time, but warming her feet under a desk, and eventually becoming the lead military personnel clerk.

Officials from the MEPS said she had limitless energy and was the "resident expert," learning her way in and around computers, and also worked part time for a tax preparation firm.

When that MEPS closed and moved to Sacramento in 1996, Alvarez made the move with about 11 other co-workers and zeroed in on another promotion — this time as the systems administrator.

It wasn't easy, what with MIRS just coming on line, and the challenge of learning an entirely new system.

"But I had a (phone) book, a phone, and a lot of very patient and helpful people within USMEPCOM," she said.

With such an active life working for the government, don't look for Alvarez to bask in the sun. She's moved back to Fresno, next door to her older sister, and is taking some tax refresher courses so she can continue working on tax preparation, and to catch up on her reading.

"I read everything," she said. "Mysteries, adventure stories, and I like doing word searches, and paint ornaments. I put in a lot of long hours, and now I have the time."

She still enjoys visiting her friends from time to time, she said.

"The last time I was there, I got a hug from everyone in the medical section, and every so often they call if they need some information. I don't mind. I'm glad to help."

But don't ask Alvarez to return to the daily work grind. She's retired, and wants everyone to know it.

"I'm enjoying myself," she said with a laugh. "They couldn't pay me enough to come back now."

'Night Out' in New York gets patriotic boost

With the Statue of Liberty as a backdrop, and the crowd of hundreds in a patriotic fervor, a military troop and her husband from the New York MEPS gave the Brooklyn community something to cheer about during the National Night Out Against Crime.

Sgt. Jeanine Ling, and her husband, Jim, a retired Air Force technical sergeant,

were invited to perform, after Jim was spotted performing at a city talent contest.

The National Night Out — a community and law enforcement event — included an evening of crime prevention information, an oldies band, children's games, health screening referrals, and other fun.

"It was an honor to be there and sing the patriotic songs," said Sgt. Ling, who also owns a karaoke business with her husband.

The two warmed the crowd with "God Bless the USA," then Sergeant Ling sang "Shadow of the Night." Hundreds raised up torches and roared with approval when Jim sang the Toby Keith number, "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue."

A long walk goodbye

By Petty Officer 1st Class
Randi Acheson
Montgomery MEPS

The first time Milton Bridges Jr. walked into the Montgomery MEPS was Dec. 6, 1966, when it was still known as the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station, and he was joining the Army.

With eight months left in his two-year hitch, he walked through the doors again as a military medical technician. He closed down that old building by helping process the last applicant before the processing station moved to Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., where he also had a hand in processing the first applicant in that building.

He tried leaving the place once before. After his Army hitch in December 1968, he walked out the door, only to come back two years later to fill a civilian health technician position.

This time, he stuck around for awhile, but the medical supervisor walked out the door again — retiring after 33 years of service.

His colleagues lined the sidewalk as Bridges made his way to his car, while “Auld Lang Syne” played from a boom box.

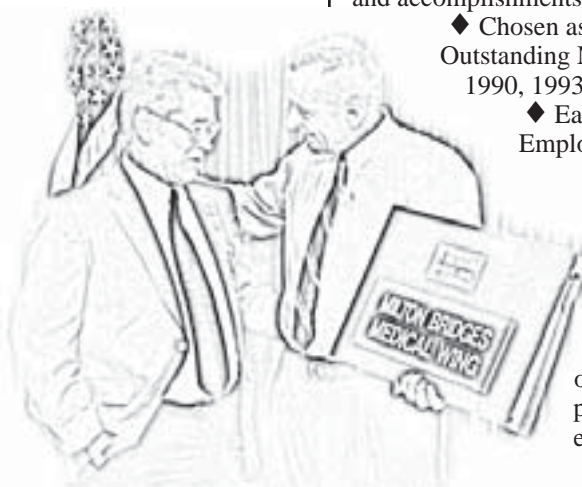
“I didn’t cry,” he said of that last walk. “But one of my Air Force staff sergeants said I looked like a kid who just lost his dog,” Bridges said.

“It’s great being retired,” he added, “but believe it or not, I still miss the work, the people, and the old building. After all those years, I surely miss it. I miss the young men and women going into the service.”

And his colleagues miss him. “He was just a wonderful, wonderful guy to work with,”

said Lucinda Harden, the commander’s secretary who worked eight years on the medical floor. “He wanted to make sure everyone was happy. He loved getting into the decorations during the holidays. He was just like a little kid!”

Bridges still gets back to visit his friends every couple of weeks, but even when he’s not there, there is a constant re-



minder of his 33 years of government service.

“The y gave me a retirement dinner and gave me all kinds of awards,” he said. “But I’ll tell you the one that just knocked my knees out from under me. It was the most touching gift. The colonel told me they dedicated the medical wing in my name. I wasn’t prepared for that one.”

The Montgomery MEPS commander, Lt. Col. Kurt Stinemetz (right), shows Milton Bridges Jr. the plaque that now hangs in the MEPS, naming the medical wing in Bridges’ honor.

Awards & Accolades

Here are a few of Milton Bridges’ awards, accolades, and accomplishments:

- ◆ Chosen as the Montgomery MEPS Outstanding Member of the Year, 1987 through 1990, 1993 through 1995, 1997, and 1998.

- ◆ Eastern Sector Outstanding Civilian Employee of the Year in 1987 and 1990.

- ◆ Worked with the Des Moines and St. Louis MEPS to institute modular processing that saved processing time and made the physical a more personal experience for each applicant.

- ◆ Organized in-house orthopedic consultations that made processing more efficient and less expensive.

- ◆ Chosen by USMEPCOM to participate on the Processing Action Team to determine training requirements and prepare training packages for all newly assigned operation officers and NCOICs.

- ◆ Received all commendable and two excellent ratings on IG inspections since promotion to medical section supervisor.

- ◆ His awards include an Army Achievement Medal, eight certificates of appreciation, two certificates of achievement, and a certificate of service.

- ◆ Presented with the Secretary of Defense coin from William S. Cohen, the Deputy Secretary of Defense coin from Rudy de Leon, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff coin from Gen. Henry H. Shelton, and the USMEPCOM Eastern Sector coin from Col. Alan Dodson.

- ◆ He processed three generations of applicants for military service including professional football players Ken Stabler, Scott Hunter, Buddy McClendon, and Woodrow Lowe.

- ◆ Every current member of the Alabama National Guard processed through the MEPS at some point during his 33 years of service.

— Petty Officer 1st Class Randi Acheson

Western Sector HQ

Sgt. Janelle Forde

Legal NCO
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: Legal NCOIC, Division Support Command, Camp Casey, Korea
First impression: "Great place to work."

Capt. Charles Beatty

Assistant Operations Officer
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Company XO, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division
Civilian education: B.A., Political Philosophy, Michigan State University
Military education: Logistics Officer's Course, Winter Mountain Survival Course
Diversions: Fly fishing, sports, running
First impression: "Everyone seems pleasant and they all have good things to say about each other."

Amarillo MEPS

1st Lt. Terrence Williams

Test Control Officer
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: 2nd Brigade Assistant S-1
Diversions: Family
First impression: "Great atmosphere!"

Master Sgt. Vernon

Pickard Jr.
 Operations Superintendent / NCOIC

Years of service: 16
Last assignment: Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, Chief, Wing Admin
Military education: ALS, Supervisor's Course, NCO Academy, SNCO Correspondence Course 5
Diversions: Running, softball, traveling
First impression: "The people were all friendly and working together as a team."



Chief Petty Officer

Mario Aguilera

Testing NCOIC
Years of service: 18
Last assignment: Leading Petty Officer, Electrical Division, USS Devastator
Military education: EM "A" School, Minesweeping School
Diversions: Jogging, racquetball
First impression: "Good place to work."

Petty Officer 2nd Class

Walter Carter

Medical NCO
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
Diversions: Sports, fishing
First impression: "I'm going to like it here. Very friendly people."

Beckley MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class

Ricky McCallister

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: USS Philippine Sea
Diversions: Chess

Boise MEPS

Steven Cook

Years of service: 7, 2 government
Last assignment: Transition Assistance Counselor, Fleet and Family Support Center, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
First impression: "A fun place to work."

Sgt. Manhal Sous

Years of service: 9
Last assignment: 322nd Signal Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C.
First impression: "People in Boise seem to be very friendly and not as uptight as they are on the East Coast."

Boston MEPS

Sgt. Faye Johnson

Medical Technician
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Fort Stewart, Ga.
Diversions: Reading, shopping, traveling
First impression: "Very helping environment."

Charlotte MEPS

Sgt. Juanita Sealey

Testing Administrator
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: Fort Jackson, S.C.
Civilian education: Associate's degree
Diversions: Reading African-American literature
First impression: "Thank God I'm on the other side," the MEPS process can be very stressful sometimes."

1st Sgt. Sarah Smith

First Sergeant
Years of service: 19
Last assignment: Korea
Civilian education: Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management
Diversions: Swimming, ceramics, reading, time with family
First impression: "Back to where it all began. I love it."

Gunnery Sgt.

Kenneth Morse

Operations NCO
Years of service: 17
Last assignment: San Diego, Calif.
Military education: Warfighting Skills, Recruiter School, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (tan belt)
Diversions: Reading, singing, spending quality time with family
First impression: "Very structured organization."

Chicago MEPS

Staff Sgt. Jamice Means

Test Administrator
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: Geilenkirchen NATO Air Base
Diversions: Swimming, reading
First impression: "Not the real Air Force."

1st Lt. Willie Cooper

Test Control Officer
Years of service: 3
Last assignment: Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont.
Diversions: Basketball, watching movies
First impression: "Interesting."

Capt. Benjamin Badie

Operations Officer
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: 1-28 Infantry Regiment, S-3, Fort Jackson, S.C.
Diversions: Working out, traveling, reading
First impression: "Great weather compared to Columbia, S.C."

Petty Officer 2nd Class

James Maldonado

Processing NCO
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: USS Chosin
Diversions: Computers, sports
First impression: "Best welcome aboard I ever had."

Dallas MEPS

Cpl. Christopher Coleman

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Admin Assistant for the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, 1st Calvary Division, Fort Hood, Texas
Diversions: Fishing, reading, racquetball, hanging out by myself
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
Civilian education: 1.5 years of college
First impression: "I will finally have enough time to go to school."

Sgt. Yvette Malpartida

Operations / Interviewer
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Fort Campbell, Ky.
Diversions: Basketball
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
First impression: "Loved it."

Sgt. Valentin Huerta III

Operations / Files Room
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: Camp Lejeune, N.C.
Diversions: Sports
Military education: Corporals Course
First impression: "WOW."

Sgt. Tiffany Childress
Personnel Specialist
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Fort Hood, Texas
Diversions: Sports
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
First impression: "Challenging."

Detroit MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric Forbes
Operations
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: USS Mount Whitney
First impression: "On-your-toes type job."

Sgt. Stacy Price
Operations
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: HHC USAG Fort Gordon, Ga.
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
Diversions: Football, basketball, weight training, my kids
First impression: "Extremely busy, but organized."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Daniel Jose Garcia
Medical
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: USCG Academy Health Care Clinic, New London, Conn.
Military education: Emergency Medical Technician Basic, Pharmacy Tech and Phlebotomist training
Diversions: Racquetball
First impression: "Busy."

Gunnery Sgt. Sean Pope
Operations NCO
Years of service: 18
Last assignment: Admin Chief/ CBIRF, Indian Head, Md.
Military education: SNCO Academy, Admin Chief Course
Diversions: Basketball, singing
First impression: "Great new challenge."

Fort Dix MEPS

Sgt. Marie France Auguste
Test Administrator
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: MCB Quantico, Va. (CPAC)
Diversions: Writing
Military education: Admin School, NCO School
First impression: "MEPS is not like anywhere else."

Houston MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Brendan Higgins
Control Desk
Years of service: 11
Last assignment: VP-5, NAS Jacksonville, Fla.

Sgt. Bridget Lindsey
Operations
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: HHC 4th Aviation Brigade 41D

Sgt. Tonya Johnson
Travel Clerk
Years of service: 7
Last assignment: 260th Infantry Regiment, Fort Jackson S.C.

Petty Officer 1st Class Benjamin Leviston
Medical
Years of service: 16
Last assignment: USS Peleliue

Jackson MEPS

Staff Sgt. Denise Heim
Test Administrator
Years of service: 11
Last assignment: NCOIC Billet Management/ Workgroup Management, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif.

Jacksonville MEPS

Dwayne Carle
Medical Clerk
Years of service: Retired
Last assignment: Naval School of Health Sciences
Diversions: Weightlifting, boxing, reading, eating
First impression: "A great place to work with very early hours."

Lisa Jones
Health Technician
Years of service: 8 (Navy)
Last assignment: Worked as a Certified Pharmacy Technician in the NARCOTEC room for Pharmacia
Diversions: Power-walking, reading, spending time with my children
Military education: Corpsman School
Civilian education: Completed requirements for Registered Nursing Program
First impression: "MEPS is a totally different world."

Staff Sgt. Juan Leon
Military Processing Clerk
Years of service: 7
Last assignment: Shaw Air Force Base, S.C.
Diversions: Computers, soccer
First impression: "A very busy place."

Kansas City MEPS

Staff Sgt. David Daggett
Medical Technician
Years of service: 7
Last assignment: Kirkland Air Force Base
Diversions: Camping, traveling, fishing, soccer
First impression: "Unsure of everyone's rank."

Staff Sgt. Perry Bergman
Medical Technician
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Hill Air Force Base, Utah
Military education: School of Aerospace Medicine, Airman Leadership School
Diversions: Paintball
First impression: "Friendly."

Knoxville MEPS

Julian Ellis
Health Technician
Last assignment: Detroit Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Diversions: Sports
First impression: "Nice place to live."

Staff Sgt. Terry Starker
MEPS HQ Admin
Last assignment: Richmond MEPS
Civilian education: Associate's degree
Diversions: Writing, guitar

2nd Lt. James Woodworth
Testing Control Officer
Last assignment: Fort Drum, N.Y.
Diversions: Reading, drawing landscapes, strategy games, and scuba diving
First impression: "Very organized, and customer-service oriented."

Los Angeles MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Alfredo Latayan
Travel Clerk
Years of service: 3
Last assignment: USS Higgins
First impression: "All right, better than the ship."

Sgt. Eric Lamont Sims
Test Administrator
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: 10th ASG/ Schools NCO
Civilian education: Associate's degree
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course, Postal School
Diversions: Traveling, video games
First impression: "Friendly people."

Louisville MEPS

Sgt. George Avila
Medical Technician
Years of service: 14
Last assignment: 44th Medical Brigade, 82d Airborne Division
Diversions: Outdoor sports
First impression: "Impressive."



Miami MEPS

Capt. Damian Jones

Operations Officer
Years of service: 11
Last assignment: Heidelberg, Germany; HQ V Corps chief of enlisted assignments
Civilian education: Master's degree, International Relations & Foreign Policy
Diversions: Amateur bodybuilding/weightlifting, cooking, reading, traveling, politics, history, and sports
First impression: "It looks a lot better than the MEPS I came through in 1988 and it is in a much better neighborhood. It makes a positive impression on applicants."

Sgt. Lisa Woods

Medical Service Specialist
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska; family practice medical technician
Civilian education: Associate's degree, General Studies
Military education: Seven Level School
Diversions: Spending time with my daughter
First impression: "Family-oriented environment."

Sgt. Christopher Brown

Test Administrator
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: MCAS Iwakuni, Japan; NCOIC, Protocol, CMCC
Military education: Basic Training, Personal administration school, Non-resident NCO course
Diversions: Partying
First impression: "Nice area."

Minneapolis MEPS

Lt. Kimani Jefferson

Operations Officer
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: USS LaSalle, Propulsion Division Officer
Military education: U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo.
Diversions: Writing, wrestling, football, chess
First impression: "Whoa!"

Capt. Brent Cuttall

Test Control Officer/Assistant Operations Officer
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Air Officer with the 3rd Battalion 8th Marines, Camp Lejeune
Civilian education: Bachelor's degree, University of Iowa
Diversions: Football, boating, spending time with family
First impression: "This isn't Camp LeJeune!"

Montgomery MEPS

Sgt. Eddie McAfee Jr.

Operations Specialist
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: Heidelberg, Germany
Diversions: Sports, traveling, movies

Oklahoma City MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class J.L. Fowler

Years of service: 8
Last assignment: ACU-5, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Sgt. Dewayne Johnson

Years of service: 13
Last assignment: G1 review board, PERSCOM

Omaha MEPS

1st Sgt. Thomas Thompson

First Sergeant
Years of service: 16
Civilian education: Bachelor's and master's degrees in Business Administration
Last assignment: Chief, Administrative Supervisor, Fort Knox, Ky.
Diversions: Sports, reading, amusement parks, spending time with my family
First impression: "What friendly people work here!"

Staff Sgt. Sherri Owsley

Testing NCOIC
Years of service: 16
Military education: BNCOC (Honor Grad)
Last assignment: Fort McNair, D.C.

Pittsburgh MEPS

Sgt. Kotas Jackson

Transportation NCOIC
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: 1111th Signal Battalion S-3, Fort Detrick, Md.
Civilian education: Associate's degree
Diversions: Football, physical fitness, music

Sgt. Andre Durden

Control Desk NCOIC
Years of service: 8
Last assignment: Okinawa, Japan
Diversions: Scuba diving, computers, health and fitness, cars
First impression: "I can't believe that I'm working at a MEPS."

Gunnery Sgt. Dennis McKinney

Operations NCOIC
Years of service: 17
Last assignment: HHS MCAS, Miramar, Calif.
Diversions: Woodcraft, collecting military antiques
First impression: "Very job-oriented, with commitment to accomplishing the mission."

Staff Sgt. Everett Jackson

Testing NCOIC
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: I Corps G-3 Ops, Fort Lewis, Wash.
Diversions: Sports, reading
First impression: "Not what I'm accustomed to, but not a bad assignment."

Sgt. Alasia Grizzard

Last assignment: U.S. Trans Command, Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

Richmond MEPS

Staff Sgt. Shunna Boykin

Medical Technician
Years of service: 6
Last assignment: Assistant NCOIC, Surgery Clinic, Maxwell Air Force Base
Diversions: Singing, cooking
First impression: "It is going to be a challenge, but I am ready."

Sgt. Stephanie Fields

Human Resources Assistant
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Executive Admin for Colonel
Diversions: Reading, decorating
First impression: "The people are very friendly."

Sgt. Alicia Cox

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 3
Last assignment: S-1 NCO, Giebelstadt, Germany
Civilian education: Bachelor of Arts in Political Science
Diversions: Braiding Hair

Sacramento MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Donnie Goodman

Test Administrator
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Recordkeeper on the USS John C. Stennis
Diversions: Basketball, playing video games
First impression: "Relaxed work environment."

Sgt. Stephen Stewart

Personnel Administration Sergeant
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: HHC 43d ASG, Fort Carson, Colo.
Civilian education: Associate's in General Studies
Military education: BNCOC, Primary Leadership Development Course
Diversions: Building models, reading, computers, swimming, working out
First impression: "Very professional environment, and courteous people."

Sgt. Clatice Barrot

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: USA MEDAC



Sgt. Joseph Emanuel Jr.
Test Administrator
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: 11th Signal Brigade
Civilian education: Bachelor's degree
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
Diversions: Reading, music, family
First impression: "Great place to work."

Sgt. Daphne Bowman
Processing Specialist
Years of service: 9
Last assignment: Fort Bragg, N.C.
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
Diversions: Basketball
First impression: "I was reminded of 12 years ago when I inprocessed at the MEPS, I never thought I would be working here."

Spc. Sherrell William Moore
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: 55th Postal Company
First impression of MEPS: "Very interesting."

San Jose MEPS
Petty Officer 2nd Class
Mario Alberto Rios
Control Desk NCO
Years of service: 4
Last assignment: USS Bridge
Diversions: Baseball, basketball, football

Sioux Falls MEPS
Sgt. Chad Hart
Testing Specialist
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: V Corp, Heidelberg, Germany
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
First impression: "The processing is more streamlined than what it was in the past."

St. Louis MEPS
Senior Chief Petty Officer Portell
Years of service: 20
Last assignment: USMEPCOM IG Team
Diversions: Family, softball
First impression: "Great location."

Tech. Sgt. Rose Baird
Years of service: 14
Last assignment: 53d Wing, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.
Military education: Seven Level School, Airman Leadership School
Diversions: Reading, going to the movies, doing anything that includes my family
First impression: "I was like, wow! I am starting all over again, from learning how a place operates to learning a new job from scratch."

Petty Officer 2nd Class
Augustin
Years of service: 14
Last assignment: Recruit Training Center Great Lakes
Military education: A&C Schools
Diversions: Walking in the woods, playing guitar, pacific islander lifestyle
First impression: "MEPS staff were and still are friendly, it looked like there would be a lot of paperwork."

Staff Sgt. Darrel Wardell
Years of service: 12
Last assignment: Korea, squad leader
Diversions: Sports, travel
First impression: "Amazed — very professional-looking."

Tampa MEPS
Sgt. 1st Class
Gregory Burrell
Medical NCOIC
Years of service: 18
Last assignment: Korea
Diversions: Reading
Military education: ANCOC
Civilian education: Associate's degree
First impression: "Excellent."

Paul James
Operations
Years of service: 10
Last assignment: FS2 onboard CGC Attu San Juan, Puerto Rico
Diversions: Football
Military education: HM "A" school, Field medic "C" school, 88M AIT, FS "A" school, Paperwork and Management "C" school, Shipboard baking "C" school
First impression: "I think this is a great job, and place to work."

Chief Petty Officer
Michael Anderson
NCOIC
Years of service: 18
Last assignment: Commander, Submarine Group Ten
Diversions: Family, horses
Military education: Submarine Basic, Quartermaster Basic,

Quartermaster Advanced, Rules of the Road Advanced, Recruiter School, All Navy Leadership Schools thru E-8 DAPA, ADAMS Facilitator, Level Four Program Manager, Celestial Navigation, Sonar Plotting
First impression of MEPS: "Impressed."

Sgt. Edgardo Santiago
Health Technician
Years of service: 5
Last assignment: Fort Bragg, N.C.
Diversions: Playing basketball, music
Military education: Primary Leadership Development Course
Civilian education: Associate's degree in Physical Therapy
First impression: "Great people, good schedule, happy to be here, a lot of time off."

Springfield takes first base championship

by Staff Sgt. Ray Carlstrom
Springfield MEPS

The Springfield MEPS softball team overcame a disastrous first inning in which they gave up 11 runs to win their first softball base championship, 20-19 at Westover Air Reserve Base.

With their backs against the wall, the "MEPS Bats" came alive in the 2nd inning and they cut into the huge lead and cut the deficit to 5 at 11-6. The fourth inning proved to be the key inning as the "Fred Sox" loaded the bases with no one out, but two sterling defensive plays by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Wimberly at shortstop kept the game within reach.

The MEPS scored 11 runs in the bottom of the 4th to take a lead that they would never relinquish. Six hitters for the MEPS team had at least 3 hits.

The MEPS squad is looking for a repeat performance next year. "We were the only team in the league to start a woman (Cathi Dutton, a family member) and she came up with key hits all year long when we needed her most," said head coach Tech. Sgt. Ron Poulton. "The team stuck together and never got down and that was the key to us winning it all."



Sgt. 1st Class Doug Wimberly (right) and Tech. Sgt. Wigley proudly display the trophy from their championship.

With love, from Germany to Fargo

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich
Messenger Associate Editor

Jeff Hanson knew that Janine was “The One” from the moment he gazed into her eyes on their impromptu first night. He knew he was going to marry that woman.

But those aren’t the kind of things you say out loud on an impromptu first night.

“Oh no,” he said with a chuckle. “I kept that to myself. But I knew.”

“I was excited,” Janine said of that first night, “but I didn’t want to get my hopes up.”

Before we go further, this isn’t the story of star-crossed lovers who found themselves separated through the years, only to realize they lived down the street from one another without realizing it, or of a lovelorn damsel in distress and a dashing prince. We’ll leave those stories to *True Romance* and the Harlequin novels.

But as far as romances go, this one isn’t bad for a *Messenger* magazine this close to Valentine’s Day. This is the story of Sgt. Janine Hanson, who works in Operations at the Fargo MEPS, and her husband Jeff, who also works at the Fargo MEPS in the Testing Section.

The story doesn’t begin in frigid cold of North Dakota, but in the old country of Germany. So if you’re reading this at home right now, set the mood ...

Light a candle ...
 Dim the lights ...
 Pour a glass of wine ...
 Cue some Barry White ...

Or if you’re still at work, a break room and a Coke will do. And if you’re in the Fargo MEPS — Like Jeff and Janine — make sure you stop by their desks often and read the story of their love affair out loud — just to let them know you care.

Jeff and Janine had already been in serious relationships before they met, but

these hadn’t worked out. After six years in the Army, he got out in 1991, and started working at a military fitness center in Hanau, Germany. Janine was stationed there, too, and was getting back on her feet after a recent divorce.

“Working out at the fitness center was a good way to relieve stress, and I knew him from there. We got to know each other there, and we’d say hello to each other, but that’s about it.”



Although she had to ask him twice to come back and talk, “... I just knew ... I looked into her eyes and told myself, ‘I’m going to be with this woman for the rest of my life,’” Jeff Hanson (left) said about the woman who’s now his wife, Sgt. Janine Hanson (right).

While many soldiers might like hitting the town after a hard day in combat boots, Janine was a single mom to Kayla, who was only 1.

“And I didn’t go out much,” she said. “Maybe four nights the whole time I was there.”

When her friends convinced her to go out for a couple drinks at the base’s Rod and Gun Club, she went along, never expecting to find the man she would later marry.

He was just out for a good time himself.

“I was with my friends and told him to come back and talk,” Janine recalled of that day back in 1996.

And, actually, he almost blew it.

“She had to ask me twice,” he said sheepishly.

The group of friends continued the evening back at Janine’s home.

“That’s when I just knew,” Jeff said.

“Before I left (for the evening), I looked into her eyes and told myself, ‘I’m going to be with this woman for the rest of my life.’”

“He was never intimidated by the fact that I was a single parent. A lot of guys wouldn’t do that,” she said. “The very next day, he called me, and we’ve been together ever since,” Janine said.

That’s not an easy proposition in a military world — especially when he had a good-paying civilian job, and she got orders to Fort Huachuca, Ariz., in 1998.

“That was a big dilemma,” Janine said. “He had lived over in Germany for some time. We had been dating for about two years, and he proposed before we left, but I wanted to hold off.”

But her man was not to be denied.

“That was OK,” Jeff said. “She thought it was too soon, and I couldn’t blame her. It didn’t take that much longer until she said yes. I just had to work at it.”

In these days when there are no dragons to slay for a man to prove his intentions, Jeff did the next best thing he could think of.

“Chucked my job and moved back with her,” he said.

“I was never really afraid of losing him,” Janine said. “It’s just that the first marriage didn’t work, and I was a little afraid of the title. But when he came back, I figured by that point he was serious.” ➡

... with love

And so, during a game of pool back in Arizona, he stopped and looked her in the eyes again.

"I told her we were going to be together, regardless, so we should get married. I didn't have a ring — just my looks. I'm surprised she didn't turn me down again," he laughed.

And on May 5, 1998, the two became husband and wife at the local courthouse.

There was never really a question as to what role Jeff would play in Kayla's life.

"Right from the start, I knew I was going to be there forever for her," Jeff said.

It wasn't long before Kayla was calling Jeff, "Daddy."

"Sometimes it would get confusing for her, because her daddy would call on the phone," he said. "He was OK with it. At first we were a little stand offish, but I told him I would never, ever try to take her away from him, and that I would support her in anything she does."

Though Kayla's father recently passed away, and Jeff said he'd like to adopt her, it's something he will leave up to her.

"I would never force her into that," he said. "She wants to keep her last name. If she ever changes her mind, then that's fine."

Jeff wanted to get back into a government job at Fort Huachuca, but government jobs were hard to come by.

"Someone had to die or retire before an opening came up," he said. "There just weren't any."

So he drove a truck and worked at a clothing store. The family moved to Indiana when Janine worked in recruiting for a year. Then she got orders to the Fargo MEPS.

"I was thinking, 'Where in the world is this place?'" Janine said. "I knew there was a movie by that name, but that's it."

At about that time Jeff saw there were job openings at the MEPS and put his name in for contention. When he got a call for the interview, "the commander didn't even know he was my husband," Janine said.

Despite the fact that the two work down the hall from one another and have been together for seven years, it seems more like seven days to hear them talk.

Initially, I was attracted to him before I even talked to him," Janine said. "It was his looks; very handsome. But after that, I got to know him, and he is one of the most kindest, down-to-Earth people I know. And he always makes me laugh."

And says Jeff: "I know it sounds corny. But I really believe she is my soul mate. It's still like the very first days. It's definitely like it's meant to be." ■

Western Sector HQ

Capt. Jason Latona

Assistant Operations Officer

Years of service: 8

Departing for: Civilian life

Award: Joint Service

Commendation Medal

Most remembered for: His quote

"Don't worry about it" and having a laid back, cool-headed and easygoing manner.

Amarillo MEPS

Master Sgt. Libby Horn

Operations Superintendent /

NCOIC

Years of service: 20

Departing for: Retirement

Award: Defense Meritorious

Service Medal

Most remembered for: Quality leadership, sense of humor, and mentorship to NCOs.

Beckley MEPS

Lt. Christopher Morse

Operations Officer

Years of service: 5

Departing for: Middle East assignment

Award: Joint Service

Commendation Medal

Most remembered for: "Being sooo good looking."

Boston MEPS

Sgt. Etta Smith

Operations

Years of service: 12

Departing for: Korea

Award: Joint Service

Commendation Medal

Most remembered for: Spirit, flexibility and mission awareness.

Chicago MEPS

Tech. Sgt. David Suedbeck

Testing NCOIC

Years of service: 20

Departing for: Retirement

Award: Defense Meritorious

Service Medal

Most remembered for: "Doing the Dew."

Sgt. Clinton Campbell

Medial NCO

Years of service: 10

Next Assignment: ETS

Award: Joint Service

Commendation Medal

Most remembered for:

Enthusiasm, quality job and diversification.

Dallas MEPS

Sgt. Michael Polendo

Processing Clerk

Years of service: 9

Departing for: Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Most remembered for: Most remembered for the introduction to all briefings, "My name is Sergeant Polendo, United States Marine Corps."

Staff Sgt. Diane Pavia

Personnel Administration

Sergeant

Years of service: 9

Departing for: Fort Wainwright, Alaska

Most remembered for:

Outstanding job proficiency and helpfulness.

Staff Sgt. Bryan Wright

Processing Specialist

Years of service: 13

Departing for: Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas

Most remembered for: His eating. When we order food as a group, everyone knew that if they did not eat before Staff Sgt. Wright, the choices would be slim. He also was known for going around with a menu every day, collecting orders and calling in lunch. Eating was definitely Staff Sgt. Wright's thing.

Staff Sgt. Andre Alford

Processing Specialist

Years of service: 7 years

Departing for: Langley Air Force Base, Hampton, Va.

Most remembered for:

Knowledge in all areas of processing, planning and organizing unit parties and dinners; and being the life of the party.

Detroit MEPS

Gunnery Sgt. David Coleman

Operations NCOIC

Years of service: 18

Departing for: Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Award: Joint Service

Commendation Medal

Fort Dix MEPS

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Hurley

Medical NCOIC

Years of service: 20

Departing for: Retirement

Award: Defense Meritorious

Service Medal

Most remembered for: His competitive sportsmanship.

Houston MEPS

Sgt. Wynn

Travel
Years of service: 12
Departing for: South Comm, Miami, Fla.
Most remembered for: "All shippers, all shippers. Please report to the ceremony briefing room."

Jackson MEPS

Felesia Herron

Military Personnel Clerk
Years of service: 20 military, 5 government
Departing for: Department of the Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, Miss.
Award: Jackson MEPS Civilian of the Quarter Certificate, Mississippi Army National Guard Certificate of Appreciation, a "limited edition" Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Coin, and a marble paperweight presented by MEPS personnel.
Most remembered for: Her extremely pleasant and outgoing attitude, as well as her unmatched professionalism in performance of all assigned duties.

Staff Sgt. Debra Davis-Hart

Files Room NCO
Departing for: U.S. Embassy, Honduras
Most remembered for: Outstanding administrative capabilities and "know how" as well as excellent rapport with other MEPS' personnel.

Jacksonville MEPS

Staff Sgt. Amanda Mallory

Military Processing Clerk
Years of service: 12
Departing for: Naval Consolidated Brig, Charleston, S.C.
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Her fast talking, and her son, Brandon.

Sgt. Teresa Norfleet

Military Processing Clerk
Years of service: 10
Departing for: ETS
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Always being quiet, and her love for God.

Petty Officer 1st Class Willie Fleming

Military Processing Clerk Supervisor
Years of service: 19
Departing for: Naval Air Station, Iceland
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: "Shriff."

Terry Jones

Command Secretary
Years of service: 14
Departing for: Medical retirement
Most remembered for: Her son Kyle, and all of his artwork.

Louisville MEPS

Staff Sgt. William Schrock

Medical Technician
Years of service: 8
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Devotion to family.

Los Angeles MEPS

Capt. Jacob Crawford III

Medical OIC/Operations Officer
Years of service: 9
Departing for: Fort Huachuca
Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal

Sgt. Dong Oh

Operations Clerk
Years of service: 7
Departing for: Korea
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal

Miami MEPS

Tech. Sgt. Lisa Campton

Medical Specialist
Departing for: Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal

Petty Officer 1st Class Roma Keesecker

Lead Processing Clerk
Departing for: Jacksonville, Fla.
Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal

Tech. Sgt. Luis Sanchez

Processing Clerk
Departing for: Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal

Minneapolis MEPS

Capt. Terence Connelly

Operations Officer
Years of service: 5
Departing for: The Amphibious Warfare School in Quantico, Va.
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal

Maj. Joseph Bray

Commander
Years of service: 13
Departing for: U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
Award: Defense Meritorious Service Medal (1st Oak Leaf Cluster)

Matthew Jackson

Military Personnel Technician
Departing for: Career in private industry.

Montgomery MEPS

Sgt. Connie Green

Administrative Clerk
Years of service: 14
Next duty position: HQ, ROTC, Fort Knox, Ky.
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal

New Orleans MEPS

Senior Chief Petty Officer Rolie Thurston

Award: Defense Meritorious Service Medal
Retirement highlights: Thurston's retirement ceremony took place in the same room in which he enlisted in the Navy more than 20 years earlier. Upon his request, Capt. Drislane administered the Oath of Enlistment to Navy shipper Michael Shipley-Stratton at the beginning of the event, symbolically replacing him in the Navy.

Bridgette Huntley

Health Technician
Departing for: Texas

Oklahoma City MEPS

Sgt. Erwin Mason

Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal
Most remembered for: His professionalism and knowledge.

Petty Officer Brian Hightower

Departing for: USS Oldendorf, San Diego, Calif.
Most remembered for: Being from Tennessee.

Omaha MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Lawan Jackson

Test Administrator and Processing NCO
Years of service: 7
Departing for: Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (USS Salvor (ARS-52))
Most remembered for: His positive attitude, and sense of humor.

Richmond MEPS

Sgt. Michael Rogers

Departing for: Separating from service to attend the Virginia State Police Academy

Staff Sgt. Vanessa Carden

Departing for: Army Recruiting School

Senior Master Sgt.

Vickie Estrella

Departing for: Kessler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Miss.

Seattle MEPS

Petty Officer 1st Class Stacey Hopfe

Testing NCOIC
Years of service: 13
Departing for: VFA-41 Lemoore, Calif.
Most remembered for: Laughing heard throughout the MEPS, "What's that, sweetie?", "You're killing me!", her attention to detail, and sticking to policy.

Capt. Mary-Kathryn

(Meg) Repperger

Test Control Officer
Years of service: 6
Separating from service
Most remembered for: Going to the gym, salads for lunch, and her willingness to help out wherever needed, especially in Medical or the front desk.

Syracuse MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Edward Kessen

Test Administrator
Years of service: 20
Departing for: Retirement
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Community service and involvement, especially with the Red Cross.

Senior Master Sgt.

Paul Salvatore

Operations NCOIC
Years of service: 23
Award: Defense Meritorious Service Medal
Most remembered for: Positive attitude, despite being stop-lossed by the Air Force.

Tampa MEPS

Senior Chief Petty Officer David Hensley

Operations NCOIC
Years of service: 25
Departing for: USS Saipan
Award: Joint Commendation Medal
Most remembered for: Fielding MIRS and making an indelible impact upon every service liaison.

APPLAUSE

AMARILLO MEPS

Sgt. Jackie Harris, re-enlistment

BOISE MEPS

Staff Sgt. Melissa Branch, promotion

BOSTON MEPS

Staff Sgt. Domingo Pacheco, promotion; **Tracy Allen**, Civilian of the 4th Quarter; **John Matthews**, Civilian of the Year; **Petty Officer Johnathan Armstrong**, Military Member of the Year

BUFFALO MEPS

Sonja Blue-Brown, Civilian of the Year; **Staff Sgt. Geneice Walker**, Military Member of the Year

DALLAS MEPS

Capt. Janelle Verbeck, **Staff Sgt. Michael Polendo**, promotion; **Beverly McCreary**, Civilian Employee of the 4th Quarter; Outstanding Civilian of the Year; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicholas Berry**, Military Member of the 4th Quarter; Military Member of the Year; **Sgt. Christopher Coleman**, promotion

INDIANAPOLIS MEPS

Sgt. Edgar Santana, completed Officer Candidate School

MIAMI MEPS

Staff Sgt. Mark Kennedy, Military Member of the Year, promotion; **Petty Officer 1st Class Nelson Anestor**, promotion

OKLAHOMA CITY MEPS

Debbie Friedt, Achievement Medal for Civilian Service; **Chief Petty Officer Keith Janousek**, Joint Service Achievement Medal; **Sgt. Aaron Duran**, Military Member of the Year; **Thurman Wagoner**, Civilian of the Year

PORTLAND, MAINE MEPS

Sgt. Charlotte Carroll, max points at promotion board; **Paul Witten**, Civilian Member of the Year GS- 4 to 6;

Jim Burnell, Civilian Member of the Year GS 10 -12 and Cluster 1 Civilian Member of the Year GS 10-12; **Petty Officer 1st Class Billy James**, frocked; **Sgt. Patricia Zamarron**, Military Member of the Year

RICHMOND MEPS

Marcia Jones, Civilian Member of the 4th Quarter, Civilian Member of the Year; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Kemmerer**, Military Member of the 4th Quarter; **Petty Officer 1st Class Jerome Beatty**, Military Member of the Year; **Staff Sgt. Shunna Boykin**, Air Force Commendation Medal

SACRAMENTO MEPS

Capt. Franklin Heisler, **Staff Sgt. Oscar Camarena**, and **Staff Sgt. Rhonda Breedy**, promotion

SAN ANTONIO MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class James Hampton, Military Member of 3rd Quarter, Military Member of the Year; **Sgt. Tharon Cook**, Military Member of 4th Quarter; **Shari Madore**, Civilian of the 4th Quarter, Civilian of the Year (GS-7 and above); **Rhonda Washington**, Civilian of Year (GS-6 and below); **Lee Hodges**, Civilian of 4th Quarter (GS-6 and below)

TAMPA MEPS

Staff Sgt. Nica Smith, Military Member of the 3rd Quarter; **Janet Rivera**, Civilian Member of the 3rd Quarter; **Sgt. Gloria Williams**, Military Member of the 4th Quarter; **David Lambert**, Civilian Member of the 4th Quarter; **Lillian Garcia**, Eastern Sector Cluster 7 Civilian of the Year; **Staff Sgt. Clay**, promotion; **Staff Sgt. Sheryl Winder**, promotion, re-enlistment; **1st Sgt. Harold Booker**, re-enlistment; **Sgt. Paz Kreiger**, re-enlistment; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul James**, re-enlistment; **Sgt. Robert Sexton**, **Sgt. Gloria Williams** and **Sgt. Mildred Eugene**, BNCOC graduates

BIRTHS

HQ USMEPCOM

Fred Butler and his wife, a daughter, **Mya Zippohah**, 6 pounds, 7 ounces, 18 inches long, born Oct. 23.

BALTIMORE MEPS

Sgt. Jason Fox and his wife, **Brandi**, a daughter, **Shelby Renee**, 7 pounds 8 ounces.

BECKLEY MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Ricky McCallister and his wife **Danielle**, a son, **Marcus Alexander**, 7 pounds, 9 ounces.

JACKSONVILLE MEPS

Cmdr. Elizabeth Froslee and **Lt. Cmdr. Mick Froslee**, a daughter, **Brigitte Ruth**, born Aug. 18.

KANSAS CITY MEPS

Sgt. Hatfield, a daughter, **Abigail Faith**, 7 pounds 13 ounces.



Master Sgt. Ross and his wife, a daughter, **Charity Rose**, 9 pounds.

MIAMI MEPS

Maureen Chestnut and her husband **Ronald**, a son, **Ronald Jr.**, 8 pounds, 2 ounces, and 19 inches long, born Oct. 24

OKLAHOMA CITY MEPS

Tina Tyner and her husband **Don**, a son, **Jalen**, 7 pounds, 1 1/2 ounces.

PORTLAND, MAINE MEPS

Petty Officer 1st Class Billy James and **Merchi**, a daughter, **Alania Diesha**, 6 pounds, 7 ounces, 19 inches long, born Oct. 23.

SACRAMENTO MEPS

Sgt. Marcus Rodriguez and his wife, **Rina**, a daughter, **Sakura Christiana Yashida**, 7 pounds, 8 ounces.

ST. LOUIS MEPS

Abby Eversman, and her husband, **Steve**, a son, **Alexander Steven**, 8 pounds 2 ounces.

Sgt. John Ilges, and his wife, **Stasa**, a son, **Patrik John**, 8 pounds, 11 ounces.

CONGRATS!

MINNEAPOLIS MEPS

To **Staff Sgt. Jason Smilie** and **Rebecca Layton** on their recent marriage.

OKLAHOMA CITY MEPS

To **Master Sgt. Mark Schultz**, U.S. Air Force, for earning a bachelor of science degree in Organizational Leadership from Southern Nazarene University, Bethany, Okla.



To **Sgt. Erwin Mason**, U.S. Army, for earning a bachelor of science degree in Political Science from the University of Oklahoma.

PORTLAND, MAINE MEPS

To **Sgt. Kelly** and **Sandra O'Guinn** on their recent marriage.

TAMPA MEPS

To **Capt. Julie Schellhase** and **Ralph Sevelius** on their recent marriage.

Command helps families, children

Denver, Phoenix, and Knoxville MEPS personnel had the same idea in mind when they reached out to local families and children in their communities. Headquarters, USMEPCOM personnel sponsored 75 children as part of what's become the annual "Star Tree."

Denver MEPS

By Lt.j.g. Jessica Allmond

Denver MEPS participated in an Adopt-A-Family program, which is designed to give an underprivileged family a brighter holiday. After calling various charities, the MEPS sponsored a single mother and her young child through the Good Samaritan House in downtown Denver, and a family with four children, aged four and under, through a local church.

With the adoption process complete, the donations poured in. "The response was amazing! So many people cleaned out their closets or attics and emptied their pockets to help," Sgt. Lindsay Dally said.

The idea to sponsor a family began with a conversation between Dally, a medical technician, and MEPS First Sergeant, Senior Chief Petty Officer Pickering. Not only did the service liaisons, Denver MEPS personnel, and the local recruiting organizations help out, service candidates

and their relatives got involved. "Once people saw what we were doing, there were some applicants and their families that asked if they could bring in items as well," Dally said, "and I wasn't going to turn down anything."

In addition to donating items, Denver MEPS personnel thought of new ways to assist. When Sgt. Lakysa Dixon, processing clerk, brought in a rocking chair as a gift, Master Sgt. Osbourne, an Army senior liaison, suggested a raffle to raise money to buy things the families would truly need. "With the money that was raised from the raffle we were able to purchase essential items like towels, washcloths, soaps, and toothbrushes," Dixon said.

The overwhelming show of dedication resulted in collecting huge amounts of shoes, blankets, clothing, furniture and accessories, food, coats, baby supplies, and personal necessities. "There were at least twenty large boxes filled with supplies and with the additional money that was donated, I was also able to buy a \$60 food voucher," Dally said.

Because of the enormous support, Denver MEPS staff was able to pick out donations for both families based on their personal needs and desires and *still* have items remaining. The remaining donations were given to the Good Samaritan House, a charity that provides shelter for 20 homeless families.

Although the holiday season has since passed, the spirit of community is still alive at Denver MEPS. "The best part about our participation is that the practice is ongoing," Dally said. "People still come up to me and ask if they can contribute items to families. It makes a difference when our donations go directly to the needy rather than being sold to the public. Not many people think about the homeless or homeless chil-

dren, but when you put it all into perspective, it makes a lot of sense to share."

Phoenix MEPS

For the second year, Phoenix MEPS and liaison personnel were able to come together to gather toys, food, clothing and donations to help support local families in need. This year the MEPS helped two families at Thanksgiving, and two families during the holidays.

"Our goal is to increase the number to at least three families during the holidays next year," Capt. Mata said. "Through the outstanding support of all MEPS and service personnel, and a contact in the social service community, we were able to give back to the community in which we work and live."

Knoxville MEPS

The Knoxville MEPS gathered donations for both the Knoxville area Ronald McDonald House, and the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program.

Sgt. Evelyn Cooper spearheaded the Ronald McDonald House campaign and Sgt. Mike Smith and Sgt. Jonathan Farrar headed up the Toys for Tots drive.

The Ronald McDonald House is a "home away from home" for many families whose children are receiving medical treatment in area medical facilities. The RMH has all the amenities of home for a fee of \$5.00 per night. This fee is waived when it creates a hardship for families. The RMH is an entirely non-profit organization that functions solely on the donations of others. MEPS staff donated non-perishable food, cleaning supplies, toiletry items, and clothing. Cooper delivered the items.

The Knoxville MEPS Toys for Tots campaign began Dec. 1, with a modest goal of 100 toys. The staff met this goal, then raised the bar to 125 toys. Once again, when this goal was reached, they raised the bar to 150. The staff rose to the occasion and, with less than 5 days to go, surpassed the 150-toy mark by one additional toy.

On Dec. 20, with a vehicle straining from the load of toys, Smith and Farrar turned over the toys to the Knoxville Navy/Marine Corps Reserve Center. ■

Headquarters Star Tree



This year Headquarters personnel contributed 234 packages for 75 children for the command's annual "Star Tree."



Tampa MEPS Patriot's Day Ceremony

Various MEPS held ceremonies on the nation's first "Patriot Day," Sept. 11, 2002.

Tampa MEPS

Perhaps the overcast day and steady rain was appropriate for the Tampa MEPS ceremony on Sept. 11 — as if the sky was crying in remembrance for those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks a year earlier.

The men and women of the Tampa MEPS — military, civilian, liaisons, and even applicants — stood in the rain for a short ceremony to honor those who died in the attacks.

Stefanie Arbuckle, a local high school student, marked the somber occasion by reading an original poem. Part of the poem read, "But we have risen and in defense, our nation stands as one. You thought you got the best of us, but the war has only begun."

El Paso MEPS

The El Paso MEPS conducted its first Patriot Day Observance. The day started with the playing of the national anthem the raising of the flag to half-staff, followed by the reading of the proclamation, a moment of silence, and Taps.

Louisville MEPS

The Louisville MEPS also participated in its own ceremony. Before the anniversary, Petty Officer 2nd Class Woody Barnes; Sgt. Christine Brown; Sgt. Jose Hernandez; and Staff Sgt. Mark Shelton participated Sept. 8 in a candle and prayer vigil at a local church.

For the anniversary, all military and civilian employees at the federal building that houses the MEPS gathered in the front plaza for a ceremony.

Staff Sgt. Lisa Avery carried the American flag during a joint service colors pre-

Stations pause to remember



El Paso MEPS' ceremony

sentation as the Jefferson High School choir sang the National Anthem. Others in the color guard included Sgt. Jamie Hines carrying the Army flag; Petty Officer 2nd Class Brett Fitzgerald carrying the Navy flag; Staff Sgt. Rhashon Ford carrying the Marine flag; Shelton carrying the Air Force flag; and Petty Officer 2nd Class Kendall Hoyt carrying the Coast Guard flag. Army Sgt. William Faery and Hernandez served as color guards for the event.



Vietnam Traveling Wall

When Fort Bliss needed an Air Force member to complete their joint service color guard, El Paso MEPS was ready to assist. Air Force Staff Sgt. Cross (far right) represents the MEPS during the local veteran's memorial ceremony that included the Vietnam Traveling Wall.

Women's History Month



Women Pioneering the Future